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NEW STATESMAN

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Money, Manipulation and Politics

It used to be the proudest boast of the British electoral system that, whatever other defects it might have, at least it was one in which the writ of Croesus did not run. Men might need to be millionaires even to compete to be President of the United States: in Britain the poorest he could still aspire to become Prime Minister. That may not yet have changed but our collective armour against the power of money in politics no longer seems as strong as it once did. The process of erosion probably began in 1959 when Lord Poole (then deputy chairman of the Tory Party) saw to it that in the run-up to the general election of that year the whole nation was blanketed by hoardings proclaiming 'Life's Better with the Conservatives'. Lord Poole's advertising campaign, based it was later revealed on a piece of amateur market research in Watford High Street, cost the Conservative Party £468,000 – but at least on that occasion the expenditure was open, if brazen.

Rather more disturbing implications attach to the financial details beginning to seep through about last year's Common Market referendum campaign. It is not just a case of the money involved, though the total sum (nearly £1.5m.) spent by the 'Europeans' easily ranks as a record for any British political party to date. Much more disquieting for the future, however, remain the sources of that wealth – and the efforts that were made at the time to conceal them. No less than 43 of Britain's largest firms contributed £10,000 apiece (or more) to the European cause, as a government White Paper of last October obligingly disclosed. But it did not, as we now know, tell anything like the whole truth. Not the least valuable contribution of David Butler's and Uwe Kitzinger's book *The 1975 Referendum* (Macmillan £7.95.), published earlier this month, lies in its revelation that – long before the vesting date for official disclosure – at least 20 major firms (including the joint-stock banks) slipped in their contributions *sub rosa*. The best available estimate is that the European Movement, and its political 'front', the Britain in Europe Campaign, was thus provided with a secret 'slush fund' of £400,000 for which it has never been made publicly answerable or accountable in any way.

When the Nixon White House was discovered to have acquired commercial or industrial funds through private channels, the British press was not slow to register its sense of horror and outrage. It is only fair to say that it has withstood the shock of finding that much the same thing can happen in Britain with admirable resilience. The collective Fleet Street doctrine would appear to be that, since the European Movement was so manifestly a good thing, only the peevish and the querulous would dream now of raising indelicate questions about the role that money played in its electoral triumph barely more than a year ago.

Yet such questions demand to be asked – and not only because of the democratic imbalance in any electoral contest where one side (the anti-Market one) could raise only £8,629.81p in private contributions, whereas the other (Britain in Europe) had at its disposal corporate funds, open and secret, exceeding £1.4m. If that were simply a matter of past history, it might be possible to pass it over – at least on the understanding that it was something that should never be allowed to happen again. But, of course, it is bound to: for business money, having successfully infiltrated its influence into any nation's politics, does not lightly abandon the power it has once tasted.

In less than two years' time – by in fact June 1978 – Britain is committed to *electing* 81 members to the new 410-strong European Parliament. Whom will those 81 British MPs represent? It looks very much as if precisely the same corporate, business interests that ensured Britain's continuing membership of the EEC will now proceed to control her destiny within it. Already the rumours are rife of the regional 'Mr Fix-Its' who are said to have both the backing and money available for appropriate and acceptable potential candidates. It is time the Government moved to put a stop to all such plutocratic pretensions. Even official funding is preferable to the power of wealth not just to speak but to dictate.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Jim's Ju-ju

A few weeks ago I launched a most successful campaign to keep this column serious, but I find now (see Letters to the Editor) that while I had closed the door on facetiousness and irresponsibility, I had inadvertently opened it to fascism and racism. Indeed, I'm no less than a Nazi – but not, I hope, a Nazi beyond redemption. The brutalising effect of just over six months in Westminster has begun to show, but I like to think that, like those Hitler Youths who were shipped to England in 1945 to be ideologically dried out, I might, by spending some time in the company of the Left, be gradually weened away from fascism and brought back to civilisation. I hope so.

But I doubt it. The Left is a jungle with laws like any other, and whether you pass through it on foot (like Jim Callaghan) or at the end of a liana (like Tony Benn) you must be constantly on your guard. The greatest danger, some say, is that the porters will desert with the baggage. The successful leader of the expedition must be continually on his guard against discontent: he must feed his men regularly, or they will pine away, surrender to superstition and disease; on the other hand, he must not indulge them too far, or they will attack the stores, filch his whisky and degenerate into unruliness. A good idea, once every three months or so, is to shoot one of the men. The party leader must remember that he rules by superstition, but that competing superstitions lie in wait all around. 'The drums! The drums! Can't you hear?' 'I can't hear anything.' 'That's precisely it. *They've stopped.*' 'Oh my God, I think I'm cracking up.'

The greatest ju-ju that the leader can have is the belief that only by his efforts will the party be able to stick together. Harold Wilson possessed this in abundance and – lo and behold – so does Callaghan. One ju-ju cancels out another, so that those who used to believe that Wilson possessed the ju-ju are now saying: 'Look at the way Jim is keeping the party together. Harold would never have been able to do it. If the public expenditure cuts had been introduced when he was in control, the party would have split down the middle. Oh yes, you have to hand it to Jim.' And it is fervently believed that Callaghan is the *only* man who could maintain party unity; although one suspects that, such is the Labour Party's fear of division, it could be kept together by almost anyone. Michael Foot could have done it, Benn could, maybe even (although let's not exaggerate) Tom Litterick could.

The important thing about the new order is, one is told, that discussion has at last become possible, that people are consulted, brought in on decisions. And indeed it does appear that there are a lot of meetings. Denis Healey goes to see the *Tribune* Group, Benn goes to see Healey, Callaghan sits in on meetings, brickbats are thrown, votes are taken, threats are made, the cabinet reaches conclusions, and then what happens? Healey gets up and says: 'Things will be thuswise, and no other.' The genius of it is, as one member of the Government was explaining to me this week, that Healey did not suddenly present his package to an astonished Commons, but allowed the cuts to be leaked in advance, agonised over and accepted, before they were ever announced. On the other hand, by advertising the cuts in advance and thereby introducing the question of confidence, Healey had prevented any effective opposition, which would have come not simply from the Left but from the Right also. There is a strong feeling in many parts of the party that the cuts were simply not necessary. How clever of Healey, then, to have got them through.

The great reason why the Left is not stronger in Parliament, according to Foot, is that they have lost the support of the unions. That part of their traditional baggage train has switched its allegiance to Callaghan, the man with the ju-ju. The defection is relatively recent – it was obvious at last year's Labour Party conference in the argument between Jack Jones and Ian Mikardo. The question one has to ask, however, is how did it come about? Was it, as Foot seems to believe, a result of negligence on the part of the Left, or was it, as I seem to believe, a result of assiduity on the part of Foot? Certainly the division is damaging to the Left's view of its own role, nature, composition and purpose.

The other day I was musing aloud to myself, in my fascist way, in one of the unmentionable bits of the Palace of Westminster, not far from one of the *Tribune* Group's more considerable figures. 'In my view,' I said idly, 'the best, the most worthwhile politician around is Tony Benn. He's streets ahead of all the rest. He's got infinitely more political nous than any of the rest of the *Tribune* lot, he's got far more . . .' There was a noise like the rumbling of distant thunder. A sort of shadow passed over the sun. People fled for shelter. I continued: '. . . far more gumption, far more chance of leading the Labour Party to socialism than . . .'

'That's typical of a middle-class intellectual like you,' exploded the enormous figure by my side, who all the time I had been talking had been swelling up like a porcupine fish, and now moved in to attack, 'typical of a bloody middle-class intellectual to go for a bloody middle-class politician like Benn. That's bloody marvellous that is.' I picked myself up off the floor and shrieked amiably: 'If you don't like the middle classes, why did you join a bloody middle-class party like the Labour Part?' 'It's not a middle-class party!' 'Yes it is,' I hurled back. We were getting on famously. 'I suppose,' he said, 'that IS is a working-class party then. That's bloody marvellous that is.' 'I'm not talking about IS', I yelled, meeting his point head on, 'I'm talking about the Labour Party.' And so we continued, in the sort of reasonable discussion which I find is so rare nowadays, each eager to convince the other of the sophistication of his point of view.

What emerged from the encounter, and what I have noticed about the Left before, was the profound suspicion in which Benn is held by those with whom he is allied. This suspicion is not simply a question of class, although there is a large element of that in it. It is also personal: 'The thing about Tony,' I was told, 'is that he never ever gets angry with you. He never tells anyone to fuck off. He's always so reasonable. There must be something wrong with a man who never blows his top.' And it is also of course to do with Benn's remaining in the Government. How is it that the man can have his cake and eat it? He is after all a late convert to the Cause. Wouldn't the best way for him to prove his conversion be to resign, in a cloud of glory, and make a principled stand?

This notion of resignation is part of the Left's curious system of awarding points for merit. Politicians are considered good if they are 'good resigning material'. For instance, Barbara Castle has gone into something of an eclipse because she does not now have the opportunity to resign over anything. She's sacking material – an inferior version of resigning material. She can't convincingly argue that she would have been in there, resigning with the best of 'em. It's too late for that.

I do not mean to imply that the Left have been telling Foot and Benn to resign. The stories to that effect appear to have been considerably more than exaggerated. The Left realise that it is important to have their men in Government. Nevertheless, there is a kind of romantic preference among them for honourable defeat. After all, I was told, Benn was unsuccessful. I appreciate this, and I appreciate that Wilson was successful. But it is hardly fair to deny Benn in advance the possibility of leading the party from the Left. To do this, he would have to be better than sacking material, or resigning material. He would have to be succeeding material. It would be a pleasant surprise, would it not, if he succeeded?

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John Morgan

Healey: The Dole Master

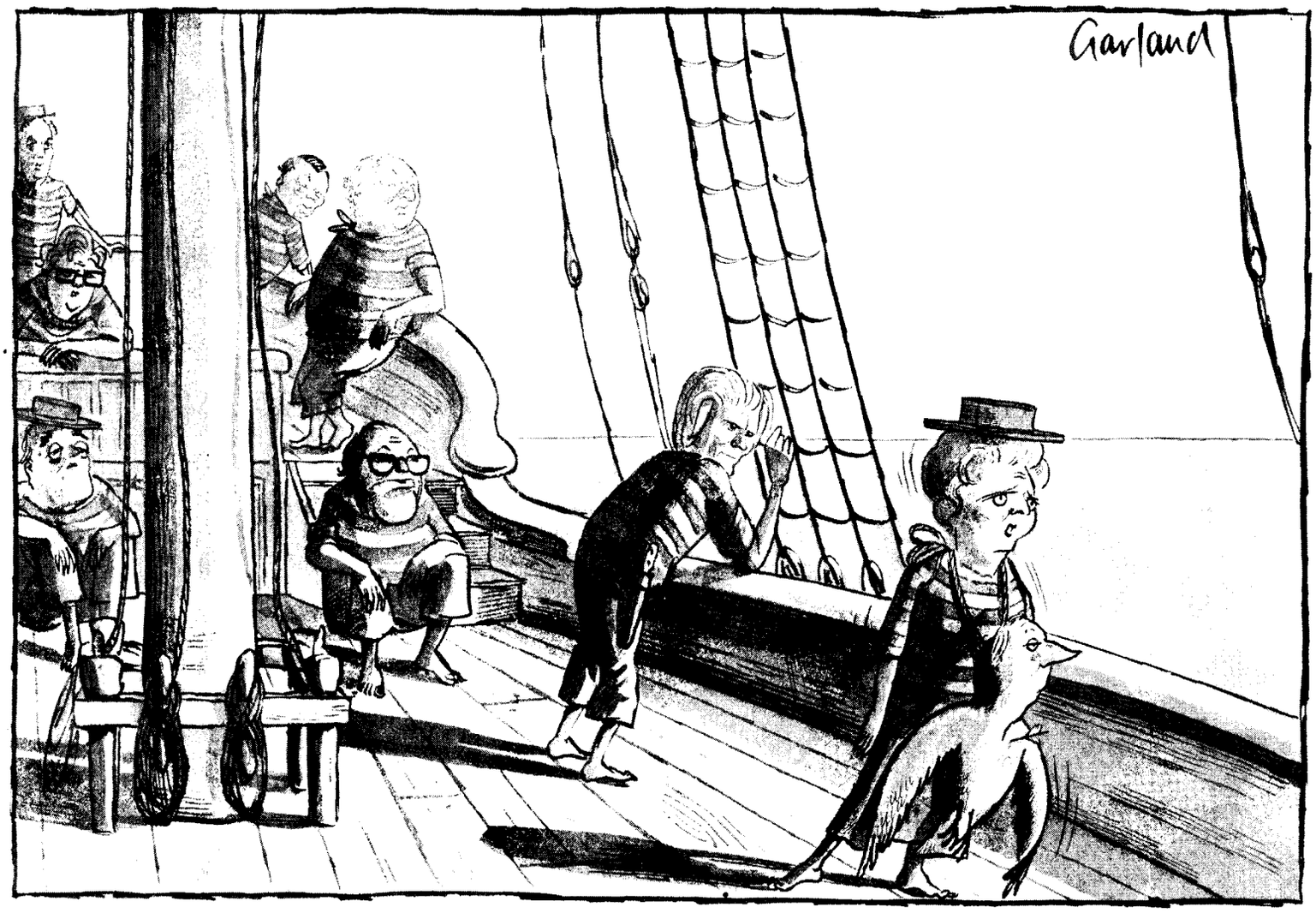
That a Labour Chancellor can rise in the Commons and announce – at his back already nearly a million and a half unemployed – a set of policies that will increase that figure by at least another 200,000, and not be driven from office, must mean something. It was true that he had nearby a Prime Minister celebrating the tenth anniversary of the last most disgraceful performance by a Labour Chancellor: the July 1966 measures. At least, though, Callaghan had the excuse that he didn't understand these things, and did what he was told by that economist Wilson: one presumes Callaghan still does not understand and that Healey is responsible. The serious questions are two: first, why this behaviour is acceptable to Labour and Parliament; secondly, what it says about the victims of Labour policy.

Although, from experience, sceptical about the concept of watersheds in political geography – usually defined by dons making a profession of historicism – it could be that we are at one of those moments where political concern needs to be redefined. Compassion for the unemployed was, after all, one of those matters that in the past transcended the more academic analyses of how an economy might be conducted. Even Ted Heath and Tony Barber grew so troubled five years ago about that awesome fact of one million being out of work that they inflated; and ruined their party for a while. The fact – and, perhaps even more militantly, the legends of the Depression – frightened the Tories. A Labour government appears to treat both with indifference.

A simple explanation of this oddity would be that in the Thirties, the Labour Party and the TUC never bothered much about the unemployed. They argued little; the demonstrations that passed into Labour mythology were usually conducted by the Communist Party and so were a nuisance. An old friend who went on the hunger march from the Welsh collieries tells me that when they reached the Commons, the Labour MPs wouldn't talk to them. The TUC were worse.

Denis Healey, being a sharp fellow and in his time a member both of the Communist and Labour parties, would know all this and may reasonably have concluded that he would have no trouble with his present party by making his bizarre speech last week. Bizarre since it increases unemployment in the private sector, increases unemployment in the building industry – that traditional index of economic growth – damages an improvement in social services, while preserving extravagance in the bureaucracy. He probably knows a few other things as well which might explain the sanguine view of the Government about the watershed they are about to stumble from.

The nature of unemployment, for example, is different from the slump of the 1880s and the 1930s. In those epochs – the second of which I was brought up in and influenced by – unemployment was localised. As a child I thought everyone suffered from unemployment, that all men hung around: that the whole world was poor. In reality a few places suffered; the metropolis and the Midlands scarcely noticed. Unemployment in Merthyr in the Thirties was



Ah! Well a-day! What evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the albatross
About my neck was hung.

– Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Ancient Mariner*

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80 per cent; in Birmingham 4 per cent. (Currently in Merthyr, given an imminent expansion, there may be a shortage of labour.) Now the unemployed are separate, whether in a street, a village, a factory, a farm, a garage, a newspaper office. They are much more members of Leibniz's definition of the monad than of Marx's concept of the proletariat. Unemployment now isolates people as individuals rather than as members of a class.

And, then, there is far more hope of skulduggery than in the Thirties. Tory thinkers in both a spiritual and vulgar fashion are trying to show that the current unemployment figures are not especially serious since there is so much moonlighting, so much fraud, so much cheerful trickery, that no one need worry too much at the possibility of human suffering. A lot is going on. In the last six months I've met a few people who are drawing dole and working. I've met even more working-class people who, paying a lot of tax for the first time, think this is an excuse for exploiting the system: it even gives them sympathy for people they'd always thought 'crooks in the City'.

The temptation is to draw from this a thesis which beguiles me – that the British have overcome the puritan, Victorian, public school ethos (into which too many of our political leaders, from Healey to Benn to Thatcher are locked) and reverted to their great strengths of vigorous banditry and hostility to government. This frivolous temptation needs to be resisted because some of the consequences of current Labour Government policies are going to be very nasty.

A quarter of a million children leaving school this year are going to be unwanted by the society that has nurtured them. Next year it will be as bad. Many of them come from poor and unlettered homes; they have not been taught either to comfort themselves with the pleasures of reading or music or with the prospect that they can practise a skill which will give them some pride or a prospect of security. Last week I talked to one mother who has three children in their teens looking for a job of any kind: her application to a local builder for *anything* for her children is a document that might trouble both the cynical who think all want to live on social security, and party managers who believe that unemployment is no longer a political matter.

That precise question would never confront a Chancellor like Mr Healey, smug with a power earned him by the working class, as he deprives that builder and that mother and her children of work: that is politics – and that may be why government is so despised. But even the Labour Government might be persuaded to see, if the MPs and the trade union leaders were not so indifferent, if Labour had not become the power-group of the *employed*, that there is a troubling callousness about their short-sighted view of the potential of their parochialism. They are helping along a society where the young are out of work. It seems that the most violent element in society are the young who are out of work. And why not? So what do we do? Create more of them. If they are black, so much the worse.

Who knows, a senior civil servant or a minister may even get mugged on his way to the Lord Mayor's banquet or a free seat at the opera. Yet for the time being they'll go on persuading local authorities to close down youth clubs and community centres, or those nursery schools that help mothers earn enough money to compensate for the husband's low wages.

Men in power have usually shrugged off social change since they always see it as coming after their time. Time may have speeded up – much as Olympic athletes now run faster. I find the present indifference of Parliament and the trade unions to good people out of work and to the next generation of our society, repugnant because I've met these people. It also strikes me that if the Labour party continue as they are, they will demonstrate that ideology is indeed dead, and that Hayek was right. But even Hayek, I'm sure, and his apostles would never have dreamed that their hour would come through a Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer. It would be too cruel to say that he has recreated fear among the working class; let's just quote Bessie Smith: 'Nobody knows you when you are down and out.'

Mary Holland

Double Standards in Dublin

Words like 'outrage' and 'mindless murder' have become part of the small change of leader-writers' prose on both sides of the Irish Sea. Even so, and even in a country numbed by seven years of dying, the immediate reaction to the murder of Christopher Ewart-Biggs, the British Ambassador in Dublin, last week was one of genuine and widespread shock, a shock deeper than many displayed at equally horrible killings in the North.

In part this was an instinctive response to the particularly violent death of a man who had been in this country less than two weeks. In shops and on the streets there were comments along the lines of 'what did he ever do to anyone? he wasn't here long enough'; the sympathy for Mr Ewart-Bigg's wife and young children came from all sorts and conditions of people. From journalists the fulsome obituaries were perhaps just a little shamefaced. Most of the political correspondents who wrote them had been mocking the Ambassador's Bertie Woosterish manner and appearance a week earlier, and he was known to have been

hurt and embarrassed by their remarks.

But more complex than any of these personal responses has been the reaction evident in the editorial's of Irish national newspapers and in the letters demanding the death penalty for the Ambassador's killers. (In fact the murder of a diplomat, like that of a policeman, is still a capital offence here.) In this there has been a lot about 'the deep humiliation of Ireland in the eyes of the world,' 'the erosion to our self-respect' and 'the damage this poisonous case of hate does to Ireland's good name'. This is still a very sensitive subject, so I cannot tell whether the leader-writers and the columnists really do believe that Ireland's good name has been more stained abroad by the murder of Ambassador Ewart-Biggs which, hideous and heartless though it was, at least had some palpable political motive recognisable to the outside world, than by the gunning down of two young parents in Belfast in front of their screaming babies a little over a fortnight ago.

But the deaths of Mervyn and Rosaline McDonald were, after all, just a part of the familiar bloody backdrop of violence done by Irishman to Irishman in the Northern part of this island. Who cares about that any longer, down here? What happened when Mr Ewart-Biggs's car exploded on a quiet country road near Leopardstown racecourse was an event of a different order. It was an attack, the most damaging yet sustained, on the institutions of the Southern Irish state. By murdering an ambassador the killers undermined Ireland's status as a civilised law-abiding Western European state with all the attendant trappings of international diplomatic relations, membership of the EEC and so on. And in a country which still finds it hard to believe that it has attained that status, which is by far the poorest member of the European Community, and which is currently threatened by seemingly intractable economic problems, this has been widely perceived as a most damaging blow.

As well as anger, the editorials and the letter columns of the leading newspapers have displayed a deep alarm. It is a fear more disturbing than the old anxiety that

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'it' – the violence in the North – could spread down here. 'It' has already spread down here. Every day now O'Connell Street is closed for several hours with bomb scares and, though foreign students rush hopefully towards the excitement, Dubliners are beginning to take the scares seriously. One hears people grumbling about the lack of adequate security precautions rather than the inconvenience these cause. But what Mr Ewart-Biggs's murder has done is to bring a more threatening perspective clearly into public view. The *Irish Independent* put its finger on this new fear in an editorial about the Ambassador's killers. 'They do not recognise the government elected by the people, nor the institutions of our law. No matter what it costs, the Irish Government must see to it that this challenge is met.'

It was the same demand which prompted Mrs Emily Lee of Rathfarnham, a prosperous Dublin suburb, to write to the *Irish Times*. Mrs Lee, who described herself as a 'fairly normal sensitive person', was appealing for the death penalty for the men who killed Mr Ewart-Biggs. 'Confidence and peace of mind,' she wrote, 'are beginning to fade.' Mrs Lee's confidence and peace of mind may well have been eroded by another recent incident here, in which five IRA prisoners on trial at the Special Criminal Court escaped during the lunch recess after blasting their way with explosives out of their cells. The Special Criminal Court was set up specifically to deal with the IRA and it might reasonably be supposed that the security measures surrounding it would be particularly stringent. In the event four of the prisoners were recaptured almost immediately, due more to good luck than good management on the part of the police. Their getaway car failed to materialise. But the fact that the IRA had been able to get explosives into the court at all seemed to demonstrate to many people here that not even the most reputedly secure of the state's institutions can be considered safe from attack.

This fact has long been known to the Irish Premier, Mr Liam Cosgrave, who, despite the British media's doubts on the subject, has never flinched from harshness in dealing with the IRA: but since last week its implications are beginning to dawn on a lot more people here, particularly those who have done well out of Ireland's recent rise in the world pecking order and the fragile prosperity which has accompanied it. The murder of the British Ambassador has brought it home that the Irish Government's fight against the IRA may yet have to be a lot tougher and possibly bloodier than anything which has yet been seen in the North. If the British Government does finally decide, or is forced, to pull out of Northern Ireland then it will have suffered at worst a humiliation, but one which will almost certainly be offset by public and political relief on all sides at home. The point is that Britain can pull out. The Irish Government does not have that option. It cannot afford to lose the war against the IRA. In that war the murder of Mr Ewart-Biggs was a grave defeat. And that, as much as the very real sympathy for the dead man's family, is what the reaction to the killing of the British Ambassador has been about.

Dublin

Alexander Cockburn

Reagan's Last Throw

Say what you will about the survivor of Dallas in 1963 and of the milk-fund scandals of a decade later, John Connally still radiates crafty Texan vigour, like a tomcat with a dubious past but still in his fertile prime. He loomed over President Ford as the latter, last Tuesday, almost shyly announced on the White House lawn that the former Governor of Texas might have something of interest to communicate to the world. The former Governor, looking both smarter and healthier than Ford, communicated forthwith. He announced his endorsement of Gerald Ford, thus ending his seemingly interminable season of fence-sitting, and making it fairly likely that Ford intends to select him as his vice-presidential running mate at the Republican Convention in Kansas City.

It would have surprised no one if Connally had been too out of breath to open his mouth. He had, after all, come rushing up from Houston at the invitation of Ford strategists zealous to seize the initiative from Reagan and the latter's amazing opening to the Left. Over the past few weeks the agit-prop battle between Ford and Reagan has been wonderful to observe, with both sides boasting of fresh delegate victories and declaring the prospective convention battle as good as won. Seasoned observers, in whom as usual no great stock need be set, were calling it narrowly for Ford until at the beginning of this week Ronald Reagan made his gamble and named Senator Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania as *his* potential running mate.

It was the sort of move where you could almost hear the adjectives drop. Was it 'bold' or was it 'desperate', was it 'a statesmanlike ploy' or 'a sordid political bargain'? By the conventional indices Senator Richard Schweiker is about as far across on the Republican spectrum from Ronald Reagan as it is possible to get. His liberal rating in the Senate is almost as pure as that of Walter Mondale. Reagan presented his choice as a decent bid to unite the party and Schweiker naturally hailed it as such himself. Neither of the two chose to make much of the obvious gloss, that Schweiker had previously been commited to Ford, and that Reagan's strategists hoped to attract crucial support from other Pennsylvania delegates also committed to Ford.

At present it looks as though the adjectives dropping into Reagan's lap will be our old friends 'desperate' and 'sordid'. Although he is, for want of a better representative, the darling of conservatives, Reagan has not got an unblemished record in this respect. He was a comparatively liberal Governor of California, so much so that right-wingers there, particularly suspicious of his 'long-time commitment to world federalism', have termed him a fraud and a sellout. Their cry is now being echoed across the country. Meldrim Thompson, the Governor of New Hampshire and a long time backer of Reagan, has announced tartly that after the Schweiker deal he will not even bother to go to Kansas. Other conservative punters are sadly crumpling their betting slips and heading for home.

It could be, in sum, that Senator Schweiker will never get his chance to run for the vice-presidency. This is sad in a way because he would, to use the phrase of some professionals, have been a natural focus for the 'abracadabra vote'. The term denotes those many people with burning interests far transcending normal political enthusiasms. Jimmy Carter, for example, was reckoned as having made a particularly deft bid for the abracadabra vote a couple of months ago by declaring that (a) he had personally seen an unidentified flying object and (b) he would, when in office, ensure that all secret data compiled by the United States Air Force on the subject of UFOs be made public. There are apparently millions of people in the United States firmly of the persuasion that only bureaucratic censorship has prevented news of landings by alien colonists from being disseminated. Many of them can now be reckoned as supporters of Carter. Schweiker has made himself conspicuous in recent months by leading a Senate inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of President Kennedy. He has declared himself dissatisfied with the report of the Warren Commission. There are millions of Americans holding the same view. Schweiker, as vice-presidential candidate, would no doubt continue to advertise his beliefs, a Republican calling for an end to the Warren cover-up. It is in fact a pity that both Reagan-Schweiker and Ford-Connally cannot run, since Schweiker could then call on Connally as a victim at Dallas and Ford as member of the Warren Commission to tell all they really know.

When Jimmy Carter nominated Mondale as his vice-presidential candidate the move was called statesmanlike, performing the quasi-sacred function known as uniting the party. The press, almost as united in its dislike for Reagan as in its tolerance for Carter, has not been so kind to poor Ronnie. Ford's coup with Connally is being termed a political plus, although Texan friends tell me that an endorsement by Connally is now often regarded as a liability there. Elsewhere, particularly in the North East, the sight of the man who pardoned Nixon running with one of the near felons of Watergate is not reckoned as congenial. Supporters of a possible Ford-Connally ticket argue that at least Connally could pull the South and South West away from Carter in the long-shot battle in November.

The reader will have noticed that as usual in such prospective journalism the words 'could' and 'would' are peppering my prose. It is after all in the nature of the journalistic trade that the future is always in doubt, since absolute certainty somewhat reduces reader interest. But Jimmy Carter, to be

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blunt about it, is currently reckoned on all available evidence as being certainly the next President of the United States, most lately endorsed by a group of businessmen in the 21 Club in New York City. This reality has forced the American media, concerned in maintaining public interest in the electoral spectacle, to one basic expedient – recalling Truman's upset of Dewey in 1948. But even the Dewey ploy, an honourable way of touching wood, is palling and the lack of tension in this year's procedures is producing some interesting effects in US journalistic practice. The main tendency now is to treat Carter as President and the locus of power as based in Plains, Georgia. Thus each nightly slice of national TV news has its report from the White House South, with – to take this week – Carter gravely announcing that after consultation with defence experts the nuclear strategy of mutual assured destruction renders the idea of a pre-emptive first strike absurd. But even the news value of Carter as president – in waiting – may soon wane and reveal plainly the present crisis of the US media, namely that not enough is happening.

In this context Ford's duet with Connally may be an excellent stroke – a reminder that at least one of the great performers of the Nixon-Watergate era is still around to be divertingly written about, and as a nostalgic recall of the days when the newspapers were fun to read and not just for weather reports about Mars.

New York

Peter Mansfield

Mr Sadat's Egypt

Sadat's Egypt is now classified by the media, with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, as one of the conservative Arab regimes; and the Egyptian Left would not disagree with the description. But for several reasons there is a danger of misleading over-simplification. The brave old days of the Cold War when Nasser was alive and Arab regimes could conveniently be divided into progressive and reactionary (or, in the Western idiom, 'extremist' and 'reasonable') are over. The present Egyptian regime is warmly pro-American and its relations with the Soviet Union show no sign of thawing. But Syria, the key Arab state which is the heart and soul of radical Arab nationalism and has long been regarded in the West as having the most unreasonable regime in the Middle East, is today accused – not only by the Palestinians – of being in secret collusion with the United States to bring the PLO under control and make way for a US-sponsored Middle East peace settlement. Egypt now comes forward as the champion of the PLO and joins the Soviet Union in demanding the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

But it is in domestic affairs that the simple classification of Sadat's regime as right-wing will not suffice. The truth is both more complex and more interesting. There are at least three distinctive right-wing elements in contemporary Egyptian political life which may agree on some points but are equally likely to conflict. One is the old-rich ancien regime which owned land, buildings, land and businesses that were requisitioned, nationalised or sequestered under Nasser's agrarian reforms or socialist laws. Some of them laid low in Egypt; rather more scattered to Western Europe, but a substantial number of those who formed the White Egyptian community in Lebanon have now returned. Much of their former wealth is lost for ever; their great landed estates cannot be recovered. But those who owned buildings in Cairo or Alexandria, which have now been desequestered, can earn enormous uncontrolled rents by letting them furnished to foreign companies or visiting oil sheikhs. (A two-roomed flat of the type I rented in Zamalek in the 1960s for £50 a month would now cost £500 to £700: so ownership of two or three buildings of this kind gives anyone a millionaire's income.) Many of these landlords are thoughtlessly incautious in their display of wealth.

There is also a nouveau regime of businessmen and administrators who are the advocates and beneficiaries of the 'open-door', or *infitah*, economic policies which Sadat has made the hallmark of his regime. More intelligent and socially aware than the old Right, this class includes some of Egypt's most able men and women. Many of them held high positions under Nasser; contrary to a widespread belief the foundations of the *infitah* policy were laid in Nasser's last years. Perhaps the outstanding, as well as the most typical, representative of this new Right is Osman Ahmed Osman, the man who was responsible for 90 per cent of the physical construction of the High Dam and is now enjoying Sadat's special confidence as Minister of Housing and Reconstruction with the task of reviving and expanding the Suez Canal Zone, Egypt's principal new growth area. Affable, energetic and pro-Western, Osman is an ideal advocate of the new style of capitalism.

In striking contrast is the third strand of the Egyptian Right – the rural Islamic conservative tradition, which has always had strong roots in Egyptian society. Like the Muslim Brotherhood, which was one of its manifestations, it has no use for modern capitalism or for progressive social ideas. It is well represented in the Egyptian Parliament or People's Assembly and may well be stronger after the October elections.

A symptomatic clash between these different right-wing philosophies took place over the anti-alcohol law which was pushed through Parliament by a group of traditionalists in the absence of Sayed Marei, the patrician liberal conservative who was the architect of the 1950s' agrarian reforms and is now President Sadat's right-hand man. This law, which would have made it illegal to serve drinks to anyone except foreigners in a few tourist ghettos, horrified the Government since it was directly opposed to the spirit of *infitah*. With a minimum of fuss the Bill was emasculated so that it is virtually limited to the removal of the enormous whisky advertisements on the Cairo Airport road that so offended Colonel Ghadaffi on his last visit to Egypt. The same is likely to happen to other proposals to revive traditional Islamic law.

The Egyptian Left is equally unhomogeneous, if more united, in its critical view of current trends in Egypt. As a first stage towards a multi-party parliamentary system, the regime has encouraged the formation of three *manabir* (variously translated as 'forums', 'tribunes' or 'platforms') within the Arab Socialist Union – one each for the Right, Centre and Left, with the Centre representing the government. Officially this neat, symmetrical arrangement satisfies everyone, although some confusion may arise among the general public because the Right forum calls itself socialist while the Left does not. The Left forum is headed by Khaled Mohieddin, the youngest member of the 1952 Free Officers Executive Committee, whose Marxist views caused him to split with Nasser (although he remains a believing Muslim who has been known to startle delegates at Third World peace conferences by taking out his prayer mat). He is reasonably content with the current political developments; he has more freedom to propagate Marxist ideas than under Nasser and his chief complaint is that the Left has no daily newspaper to put them over.

The Left does have a weekly in *Rose el-Youssef* and a heavyweight monthly in *al-Talia* but the left-wing intellectuals who held a key position on *al-Ahram* under Mohammed Hasanein Heykal's protection have been edged aside while the other main daily *al-Akhbar* is in the podgy Beaverbrookian hands of Mustafa Amin. But Mohieddin makes it clear that this does not worry him unduly because he is confident that the inegalitarian aspects of the current move to the Right will soon provoke a counter-reaction among the mass of the people who see the gap between the rich and poor widening again after narrowing distinctly in the 1960s. Where Mohieddin may be wrong is in believing that his 'forum' will reap all the benefit in the coming elections. There is a significant and mainly youthful group calling themselves Nasserites (or 'sons of the Revolution' as one of them described himself to me), who resent the fact that so far they have not been allowed to establish a 'forum' of their own. They claim a following of 80 per cent of the two thirds of the Egyptian population who are under 35 and deny that the communist-dominated Left forum can represent them. They say that the only survivor of the 1952 revolution in the present regime is Sadat himself and he, for understandable reasons, refuses to identify with any political group. The President fends off questions about his attitude to Nasserism by saying that this is now irrelevant because Egypt has passed into a new stage with different problems.

Both the Marxist and the Nasserist criti-

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cism is less of the 'open-door' policy as such than of the way in which it is being implemented. The complaint is that new foreign investment is going into 'chocolate factories, Wimpy bars and Kentucky Fried Chicken' – which are hardly Egypt's priority needs. Their other main protest is that the influx of foreign businessmen and high-spending Arabs from the oil states has driven up the price of housing, food, rents and all essentials to cause severe hardship for all but the wealthiest Egyptians.

Sadat himself, who is no complacent reactionary, has shown that he is aware of this problem, as have the bright young men who run Egypt's economic ministries. They say that both the new and the old rich must be taxed to the hilt to prevent the social gulf from widening and that the question of ensuring that new investment is directed into priority areas awaits the establishment of the right administrative machinery. This is being done, they say, but takes time. Their intentions are patently sincere but they could be defeated by the mindless selfishness of the old ruling class and its contempt for the mass of its fellow Egyptians. These people were lucky that no guillotines were set up after 1952; they may not be so fortunate next time.

Thoughtful Egyptians of both Left and Right are united in their concern about the country's major problem – demographic explosion. Forty million Egyptians are now squeezed into the 4 per cent of Egypt which is not desert – an area about the same as that of Holland which is regarded as overcrowded with its population of 14 million. Mrs Jehan Sadat, who is much more than the ornamental queen-consort she is sometimes made out to be in the media, spoke passionately to me about the need to use every kind of persuasion, bribes and even punishment to get the *fellahin* to limit themselves to two children. Her views were widely echoed but it was significant that the feeling was almost as widespread that the problem could not be solved in a purely national context. Patrician Copts and other Egyptian nationalists who have no cause for sympathy with pan-Arabism are united in saying that Egypt must look on itself as an integral part of the whole region. Egypt has the skilled and semi-skilled manpower. It needs Arab capital and the opportunity to farm Arab land. This kind of economic integration is politically sensitive because of other Arab fears of Egyptian domination – although this is less of a problem with the absence of Nasser's dominating figure and the great increase in the wealth and influence of the Arab oil states. What cannot be denied is that without the outlets for hundreds of thousands of Egyptians in other parts of the Arab world (22,000 teachers alone this year) Egypt's economic plight would be near desperation.

This is why the common antithesis between 'Egypt-firsters' and pan-Arabists is essentially false. Egypt will not withdraw into isolation from the other Arabs because it is manifestly against its interests to do so. It is equally true that *infitah*, the opening to the West and the revival of the private sector, cannot involve a return to anything resembling the social and political system under the monarchy – without the risk of provoking an upheaval which could hardly be as bloodless as that of 1952.

Cairo

Christopher Hitchens

Colonel Ghadaffi's Libya

'The lunatic of Libya' was President Sadat's most recent attempt at a definition of Colonel Ghadaffi. He delivered it during Egypt's national day last week, a day that is ironically celebrated as a public festival in Libya as well. Ghadaffi's reverence for Nasser is exceeded by nothing but his reverence for himself; one even sees the occasional poster of the founder of modern Arab nationalism, smothered by scores of the Colonel (and in one instance, eccentrically, by a portrait of Giscard d'Estaing).

Libya's redeemer has long ago exhausted the hyperboles of his enemies and his admirers. He is young, visionary and dashing – or puerile, unbalanced and erratic – depending on which way you slice it. He prefers his power taken neat. Of the original 12 members of the Revolutionary Command Council two (Majors Hawadi and Hamza) are in detention and two (Majors Muhaishi and Al Huni) have fled abroad. Another was killed in an apparently bona fide car crash. And the Prime Minister – Major Jalloud – has been two months in Beirut filling the fruitless role of a mediator. Evidently, Ghadaffi does not think that Libyan statecraft calls for very much in the way of checks and balances. Nor, if it comes to that, did any of his predecessors whose departure-dates (the Italian *fascisti*, the Americans, the British) are all anniversary-fodder as well. But Ghadaffi is distinguished from the more routine kind of putsch-monger and demagogue by having an ideology all of his own. It is called 'The Third International Theory', a box of unsorted ideas worked out by the leader himself. *Al Thawrah* (The Revolution) and *Al Jihad* (The Holy War) are often intermingled in this salad of ideas, with baroque results. It is defined by 'aspects' of which the 'metaphysical' one is: 'The contents of the heavenly messages according to which modern science is interpreted.' That is for adult consumption. What are they teaching the children? Incidentally, the stated objectives of the Arab Socialist Union in Libya include 'to prevent the people from falling in the stranglehold of one class or one individual' and 'to denounce right-wing puritanistic ideas, as well as the parasite left'. Now, wall-posters in Tripoli do not exactly eschew the individual, while Muslims and non-Muslims are prevented from buying or consuming a drink in puritan Libya. Parasite leftists must needs ferret away half bottles of whisky in their sponge-bags when paying a visit.

The thing that gives Ghadaffi his prestige is the issue of the Palestinians. Those who affect surprise at Arab feeling on this question often pretend that it is only used by corrupt and despotic regimes as a means of distracting the masses from their superstitious and neglected lot. Nothing could be less perceptive: any government that relaxed its stand beyond a certain point would probably fall. Currently the great issue is Lebanon, where a ragged army of Palestinian refugees and Lebanese Left-wingers is confronting a Syrian invasion, an entrenched local Falange party, and the combined hostility of the Russians, the Americans, the Israelis and the Saudis.

In Beirut last September I was told by PLO supporters that 'come the four corners of the world in arms' they would fight them off. Now they are being called upon to do it, and Ghadaffi is paying a large number of their bills. Diplomatic sources in Tripoli say that the length and complexity of the struggle is blunting his enthusiasm, but given that he denounced the October 1973 war and the later Arab oil summit as being irrelevant to the Palestinian struggle, this point seems at least debatable. He may at last have found his cause, and the vehemence with which other states denounce him is due to the fact that they recognise the present conflict's potential as a detonator far beyond the borders of Israel or Lebanon.

One way in which Arab states *do* manipulate the issue of the PLO is by holding competitive conferences in their support. This autumn, the Iraqis will hold one. So last weekend, the Association of Libyan Lawyers held one too, and invited myself among others. It was tightly overseen by officials, and much-harangued by fraternal OAU diplomats (Uganda mysteriously missing from the list). The only really absorbing session was one featuring anti-Zionist Jewish spokesmen, chiefly from North America. Foremost was Dr Alfred Lilienthal who has been fighting this lonely corner ever since he was a GI in the Middle East 30 years ago. But there was also a Mr Neuberger from the fascinating Naturei Karta sect of Jews, based in Jerusalem, who look on Zionism as a blasphemy against the Torah and the Talmud. They support the PLO. Mr Neuberger was warmly applauded, though I noticed that his speech also contained an attack on the theory of evolution. The entire proceedings had been opened by ten minutes intoned from the Koran by a *muezzin*, which seemed odd since the subject under discussion was a secular state.

Libya is swamped in oil money, and has a very small (2.5 million) population. It is not difficult to control politically, and Tripoli is resounding to the noise of new construction; whether of housing estates, barracks, hotels or roads. Perhaps it is the astonishing Roman remains on the coast just outside which give the impression that the desert will nevertheless be back one day. Or perhaps it is the fact that Libya is now ruled by the greatest Ozymandias of them all.

Tripoli

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Mervyn Jones

Race, Racism and Truth

Mr Jim Merrick, the leading spirit of the National Front in Bradford, is a person whose political outlook calls for no hair-splitting argument. 'I don't object a bit if you call me a fascist,' he said when I interviewed him. 'This country needs a right-wing dictatorship. I admire General Amin for his dedication to his own people.' He thinks that it was reasonable for Amin to expel the Uganda Asians, but wrong for Britain to receive them. He favours the deportation ('I don't call it repatriation') of all immigrants who have arrived in Britain since 1950, plus all children of such immigrants, including those now adult. They are not British even if born here, he says, falsely of course. He would begin by deporting illegal immigrants – 'that would shift half the buggers'. Half the immigrants, he asserts, came in illegally. Since half the arrivals were before 1962, when there was no control and therefore no illegality, this is patently absurd. Untrue, in fact.

According to Mr Merrick, it's a scandal that there are no health checks on arriving immigrants. According to Mr Merrick ten minutes later, 25 per cent of immigrant children arrive with parasitic worms. But if there are no health checks . . . ? Mr Merrick hurries on to talk about drugs.

He claims that a Hindu, or possibly Sikh, temple in Bradford is a permanent storehouse for illegal drugs. Has he informed the police, I ask? 'You'd think twice about that. You could easily get a bomb through your window.' (He has been making wild statements about immigrants for years and no such thing has ever happened.) But surely informing the police would be any citizen's duty? 'Ah, the police know.' Then why don't they take action? 'It's hard to get evidence.' But since the police have rights of forcible entry where drugs are suspected, and since there has been no raid, let alone a charge, let alone a conviction, the accusation may not be true? 'I know it's true all right.' And so doubtless he tells all those in Bradford who listen to him. I talk to Chief Superintendent Mogg of the Bradford police, who says he has never heard of the allegation and warns me against 'nebulous stories'.

Although racists always complain of 'media suppression', propaganda against minority communities gets immense prominence. For instance, Enoch Powell's celebrated speech in 1968 was printed in full in *The Times;* I can't recall a speech of such length ever being so treated in the British press, except when the *Observer* ran the full text of Khrushchev's secret speech. In 1970, when Mr Tony Benn made a speech attacking Mr Powell on the issue, *The Times* commented that Mr Benn 'is an exceptionally silly man'. Yet all this propaganda is carried on by distortion or invention. Especially, the National Front resembles Hitler's Nazi Party not only in being fascist and racist but also in being a conspiracy against truth.

A current fashion in the respectable press, including the liberal press, is to ascribe the support of the NF to 'understandable' white resentments and grievances. To be frank I'm getting somewhat fed up with this, having spent the last few weeks in Bradford, Manchester and the poorer parts of London, where the minorities have the biggest resentments and grievances in that they have the worst housing, the worst schools and the highest unemployment. Of course under capitalism all working-class people have plenty to complain about, but the fashion evades one essential point: the immediate reason why people support the NF is that they are being conned and lied to. It's now possible to read long articles about race conflict which never mention that racists are liars, and certainly never contradict racist lies. This can only confer respectability on the NF, and sure enough we have Mr Tom Forester (*New Society*, 15 July) describing it as 'a serious, credible party'. This journal is written in sociologese and not in English, so one grasps that Mr Forester uses these terms in a quantitative sense, meaning that the support is serious and credible. But in ordinary English what he says is false; a party that talks rubbish isn't serious and a party that tells lies isn't credible. His article contains five specific allegations against the minorities, all quoted from NF supporters, none of which is refuted or even queried. This is weak, sloppy, harmful journalism.

I don't believe in banning the NF, nor in silencing or punishing its speakers. I believe in truth as a sufficient weapon and as a value in itself. But just as democracy must fight or else be vanquished by its enemies, so truth must fight or else be vanquished by lies.

Over the past ten years, the background to race relations has changed in three important respects. First, the 1971 census shows 43 per cent of the non-white population as born in Britain, with West Indians 50 per cent. Pakistani men were slower than West Indians or Indians in bringing their families here, but are now doing so; this is a healthy development, in view of the obvious social strains attaching to large numbers of men living in dormitories. More than half of the non-white population will soon be British-born, and although these are mostly children they include increasing numbers of teenagers and adults. It's therefore more accurate to speak of minority communities than to go on using the obsolete term 'immigrant'. Between 1968 and 1974 the non-white population rose by 258,000 because of immigration, but by 269,000 because of natural increase. Incidentally, 8 per cent of West Indian men are married to white women.

Secondly, unemployment has accentuated the handicap of belonging to the minorities. The stock liberal argument (always rather suspect) that immigrants were needed to remedy labour shortages is no longer valid. When unemployment started to rise it didn't hit the minorities, because so many had jobs in city transport, on the railways, or as local government labourers, spheres in which fluctuation wasn't great and there had long been shortages. The picture has now been altered by the contraction of the whole economy, as well as by cuts in these very services. Over an 18-month period up to May 1975 (such were the latest figures available to Mr Michael Alison MP, who looked into the matter) unemployment rose by 65 per cent for the general population but by 156 per cent for the minorities, and by 182 per cent for young West Indians. We are not far from a situation in which a black school-leaver in Brixton will feel that finding a job is as hopeless for him as for his counterpart in Harlem.

Thirdly, it's now widely accepted that the old concept of discrimination (although goodness knows there's still plenty of that) must be broadened by that of disadvantage, meaning that the minorities as a social group occupy an inferior position. The NF Big Lie is of course that the minorities are advantageously treated. The reality is exhaustively documented in the PEP report, *The Facts of Racial Disadvantage* (Research Publications Services, Fingall St, London SE10, £5.80). For instance: 40 per cent of white people, 8 per cent of West Indians and 8 per cent of Pakistanis have white-collar jobs. Homes lacking basic amenities are occupied by 18 per cent of white people and by 37 per cent of non-whites – despite the improvements made at their own expense by many non-whites who have bought houses. Sir Geoffrey Wilson, chairman of the Race Relations Board, told me that the procedure based on complaints against discrimination has proved pretty effective in non-competitive situations (such as being served in pubs) but inadequate for competitive situations – jobs, housing, education. The new Race Relations Act, soon to be on the statute book, recognises the defect; a revamped Commission for Racial Equality will have powers to investigate general disadvantage on its own initiative. But when you look round the Moss Side district of Manchester, where most of the West Indians live, and then take a short bus-ride to a white working-class neighbourhood, you can see that it will take more than laws and commissions to erode the disadvantage.

Moss Side ought to be not a bad place to live. The streets are lined with small houses, some of the vintage working-class type with front doors straight off the pavement, some with little gardens. The flavour of Coronation Street is strong – little neighbourhood groceries, off-licences, fish-and-chip shops. The blacks have been there in considerable numbers, mostly buying houses, since the

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Only three years old, Quartet has earned fame and respect by its pursuit of an adventurous publishing programme, typified by such notable and bestselling titles as Alex Comfort's *The Joy of Sex*, Stuart Holland's *The Socialist Challenge*, Ross Russell's *Bird Lives!* and Bernstein and Woodward's *All the President's Men*. Since June of this year, the substantial pool of flair and expertise which has attracted such praise as 'that young and enterprising publishing company' *(Spectator)* and 'that relatively new and thrusting publishing company' *(Guardian)* is backed by the resources and drive of the Namara Group headed by Naim Attallah. No less adventurous, thrusting or enterprising, Namara will enable Quartet to become an explosive force in international publishing. Glad tidings for authors, agents, booksellers and the public alike.

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Quartet

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1950s, but are not the only element; there are English and Irish families, East Europeans, and Asians. You often find in mixed districts that the white people are elderly survivors, but in Moss Side many are youngish and have come in more recently than a lot of blacks.

The state of relationships between blacks and whites isn't easily judged by the visitor, and when one starts asking the blacks they don't all agree. Mr Vibert Rodney, a Guyanan who has been here for 15 years and is a key figure in the West Indian Sports and Social Club, says that hostility has steadily diminished. 'Living here is a way of life,' he says. 'Moss Side people know how to solve their problems among themselves.' Ms Mimi Tsele, a black South African active in the Moss Side People's Centre, has reservations: 'It looks good on the surface but it doesn't take much to spark off an incident.' Mr Charlie Moore, warden of the Youth Centre, finds underlying hostility coming out on sporting occasions. A Moss Side cricket or football team is by definition black, its rivals white. The Youth Centre is in theory open to all, but white youngsters over the age of 14 don't come.

Everyone agrees that there are no fights or examples of racist violence. The National Front is not in evidence. 'They float around, but it's no hunting-ground for them,' says Mr Rodney. He then grins broadly and adds: 'Black men will always be very dominant in Moss Side.' This is what one generally hears in established West Indian districts. In Brixton the West Indian editor of *Race Today*, Mr Darcus Howe, talked to me indignantly about attacks on Asians in Southall and in East London but scouted the possibilities of attacks on blacks in his own manor. 'Oh no, they wouldn't dare.'

Doomed Past

In recent years Moss Side has been a victim of the mania for redevelopment. Thousands of houses were demolished, thousands of people rehoused in huge blocks of flats. The blacks stayed in the area whenever they could; the whites in general accepted offers farther from the city centre, and different white families were brought in from outlying towns now included in Greater Manchester. Moss Side people nearly all hate the flats, regret the demise of their old houses, and declare that the flats are worse to live in and more slum-like if measured by such yardsticks as size of rooms or daylight (many flats overlook courtyards, and Moss Side streets were quite wide). Mr Moore told me that the flats stink, the drainage system is inadequate, they're full of insects which you didn't find in the old houses. The Corporation has now changed its building policy and the newest development, Alexandra Park, consists of individual houses lining new streets, mostly called something Walk or something Close. What hasn't changed is the determination to wipe out the old Moss Side, and the remaining part of it is apparently doomed.

As well as the old homes, people badly miss the old corner shops. The Alexandra Park plan promises 1,408 dwellings and four shops, a recipe for lifelessness. Shopping has been concentrated in a big American-style shopping centre. It can mean a 20-minute walk for a woman who finds she's out of tea; it's the wrong side of a busy traffic route; it has law and order problems and security guards; and the rents are so high that chain-stores dominate, to the exclusion of small shopkeepers, in particular blacks or Asians. Also, the vanished corner shops provided a lot of jobs for Moss Side youngsters. Going round the shopping centre, I noticed that the sales staff are practically all white.

The three factories that formerly existed in Moss Side have also been swept away, and a job in industry means a trip out of Manchester to the big plants like AEI. The engineering industry is in any case cutting back on labour, so unemployment in Moss Side is frighteningly high. There are a few training courses in local 'job creation' centres, but black youths and girls often leave the schools without the qualifications to enter. They hang around the streets or frequent clubs which are notorious for after-hours drinking, illegal gambling, drug-peddling and prostitution. Black community leaders like Mr Moore and Ms Tsele want these clubs closed down, and strongly suspect that the police are paid off.

Police Prejudice

Unemployment, added to the physical destruction of the old community, is making life in Moss Side more unpleasant every year. There are street-walkers, often using houses awaiting demolition, and because of this there are kerb-crawlers who accost respectable women. There's a certain amount of mugging. And there's constant friction between blacks and the police. I listened to a whole string of circumstantial accounts of black youngsters being picked up while walking home, knocked about in police stations, and released without being accused of anything. One can never get to the bottom of such incidents, but the universal belief that the Manchester police are prejudiced is pretty striking. In the 1960s a number of blacks with experience in West Indian police forces tried to join the Manchester force, but weren't accepted; now, none apply. You do raise your eyebrows when you hear that a 16-year-old girl is now on bail charged with assaulting *eight* policemen. I talked to a man who had witnessed the incident; he said that while the girl was being held down by four of the eight, a white woman abused her and hit her on the face with a handbag, and then walked away 'unobserved' by the police. My impression was that this man was telling me the truth.

To Moss Side blacks, the official white world is either repressive or paternalistic. There's only one youth club open during the day, and it was started entirely through the initiative of the black community. The Corporation has now given a grant and appointed a youth worker, who is white. The blacks say that she's a nice young lady, but point out that they could have found a score of people for the job from among themselves. Social workers are also white, middle-class and remote – literally so, since their old office has been destroyed by redevelopment and they work from a new one outside Moss Side. Moss Siders try to grapple with their problems through grass-roots organisations: the People's Centre, the Family Advice Centre, the Black Women's Co-operative, all housed in a derelict school. Here I found Ms Tsele running courses for local girls in typing and office skills. The girls had been rejected by other teaching institutions, both official and commercial.

Second Generation

Manningham, the part of Bradford where thousands of Indians and Pakistanis live, differs from Moss Side in that you can hardly call it a mixed neighbourhood. No statistics can be cited because it doesn't coincide with ward boundaries, but a realistic map would show a compact district that's pretty solidly Asian. Virtually all the shops are Asian, the cafés and restaurants are Asian, the cinemas show Indian films, and when I passed a junior school I counted 50 kids in the playground and couldn't see a white face. It's very odd to connect these facts with the solid stone houses, the cobbled streets where you could shoot a period epic for TV, the huge Christian Science church (stone laid 1875), the huge Baptist church (stone laid 1899), the Corporation Baths, the venerable woollen mills. The modern paradox is that Asians live in an environment that J. B. Priestley would recognise as archetypically Bradford, while whites live on 'estates' that might be anywhere in the South of England. After seeing only brown faces as you make your way up Lumb Lane, you suddenly see a lot of white men sitting outside the gate of a mill during the lunch-break. They work there; it's the night shift that is Asian.

Up to a point, it's true that Asians live in Manningham because they like to own their houses and, unlike West Indians, don't reconcile themselves easily to being council tenants; also because the larger houses are adaptable for the traditional extended family. But in the local office of SHARE, a housing group connected with Shelter, Mr Mohammed Ajeeb adds the crucial point: 'Asians live here because they're poor.' Some white families left Manningham because they couldn't bear having Asian neighbours, but many more simply because they could afford better homes. 'Don't imagine,' said Mr Ajeeb, 'that Asians are incapable of seeing that their houses are of low quality and the environment is poor. They have the same aspirations as anyone else.'

The crunch will come when authority decides to put the bulldozers into Manningham. Mr Ajeeb is battling to save Southfields Square (70 homes, four business premises, one mosque) which I'd have thought deserves conservation as a good example of Victorian domestic architecture, apart from the fact that nearly all the houses have recently installed baths and indoor toilets. Other Asians, however, are living in poorer conditions; a survey of 23 households not far away showed only three with indoor toilets. But Bradford, like Manchester, is slow to accept that renovation is better than redevelopment.

The old houses were bought cheap when the Asians arrived in the 1960s, and when

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clearance is imminent the district valuer's compensation won't solve anybody's problem. Market values jump fast if it's a question of buying in a better (i.e. white) neighbourhood; and some vendors, influenced by or afraid of racist forces, decline to sell to Asians, or ask fancy prices. A SHARE survey of 38 Asian families – in which the men were earning less than £40 a week including overtime and night-shift allowance – found 20 hoping to buy if they had to move, but 18 of them said that their top purchase price would be £3,000. Clearly, they are destined to become council tenants.

It's foreseeable that some Asians will be obliged to get out of Manningham, and others will want to in order to achieve better conditions. We'll see this more and more as the second generation grows up. Mr Edward Lyons, the MP whose constituency includes Manningham, makes a comparison with the Jews who arrived in Britain early in this century. The original immigrant is content to work long hours at a humble job, but encourages his son to aim at entering a profession or having his own business. In fact, Asian youngsters study devotedly and do very well at school when they get adequate teaching.

National Front March

In liberal circles it has hitherto been accepted that race relations in Bradford were outstandingly good. Mr Ajeeb comments: 'It's been assumed that if you have no crime or violence you have no problems.' Mr Ramindar Singh, a lecturer at Bradford College, says: 'The first immigrants were poorly educated, content with a low social and economic status, not politically conscious, no trouble even to prejudiced whites. That's bound to change.' One aspect of 'no trouble' was that Asians nearly all did unskilled and underpaid work; another was that they didn't venture into salubrious neighbourhoods. Though non-whites are approaching 15 per cent of Bradford's population, probably the highest figures in any British city, there are large areas in which you'd be unaware of their existence.

The National Front, which polled 11 per cent in Bradford's 1976 local elections, has the aim (short of deportation) of keeping the minority community 'in its place' – an inferior place, of course. This is to be done partly by fomenting resentment when demands for equality are made, partly by intimidation, of which the NF march which encircled Manningham on 24 April was an example. The situation is now fairly tense, and the president of the Pakistan Association told me: 'Our people are worried and upset.' But there's also a new mood of resolution, as well as of closer co-operation between the hitherto divided Pakistanis and Indians. Mr M. A. Qureshi of the Asian Workers' Association regards the NF as a threat, but to some extent an inflated one; to get 1,000 marchers it had to bring coaches from all over England. 'If they come into Manningham we'll show them we can defend ourselves,' he says.

Self-defence is the lesson that Asians, following West Indians, are learning wherever they are under attack. One sees this clearly in the East End of London, and notably in Spitalfields. This warren of old streets and dark, airless little tailoring workshops can claim to be the oldest industrial district in the world, dating back to the silk-weaving introduced by the French Huguenots. The Jamme Masjid, or Great Mosque, is the same building that you'll find illustrated in Arnold Wesker's book about his childhood; it was then the Great Synagogue. But the sundial high on the wall is dated 1745 and it was originally a French Protestant church. Hawksmoor's grandiose parish church didn't yield to the Jews but is now closed, with weeds growing on the steps. The Church of England conducts business in a modest adapted building in Hanbury Street, between Diwan Enterprises and Dinkar Textiles.

Community Protection

The Jews still own businesses in Spitalfields, but no longer live there or do much of the work. The people who do both are Bengalis (usually called Pakis by the surrounding white population, since they arrived when Bangladesh was part of Pakistan). But except for the brown faces, Dickens or Mayhew would easily recognise Spitalfields. There are still sweatshops, and there are still slum landlords, clinging to whatever isn't council property. Bombing and redevelopment have left a strange tangle of old houses – some with fine 18th-century doors – grim Victorian tenements, and council flats of all periods from the 1930 five-floor walk-up to the high-rise.

Recently an Asian family, whose home the GLC wished to acquire and demolish, was given a flat in a block hitherto occupied only by white families. When the Asians arrived a crowd barred their way. A local NF organiser was soon on the scene and chalked. 'No Pakis here' on the door of the flat. The police were called and told the would-be tenant: 'We can get you in, but we can't protect you for 24 hours.' The GLC has now given this family a transfer to a block where some Asians already live.

Recently, too, an Asian family took over a flat in similar circumstances and managed to stay for a couple of weeks. During this time they were in a virtual state of siege. The man couldn't go to work, the wife to the shops, nor the children to school without being followed, abused and several times struck. They appealed to the Bengali Housing Action Group, who helped them to move to Pelham Buildings, an old tenement block taken over by squatters. The BHAG had to send a 20-strong team to get the family and furniture safely out. About 300 Asian families are living as squatters in the East End, all without agreements with the Tower Hamlets council, most spending about £200 to render dwellings habitable which had been deliberately wrecked by officialdom, and some by candlelight because of prohibitive deposits demanded by the Electricity Board. These Bengalis are squatting because they are homeless, or because the council's procedures offer them no prospect of getting a flat; for instance, some who went back to Bangladesh for a few months' family visit returned to London to find themselves crossed off the waiting list. A council flat, therefore, isn't casually relinquished. I've seen Pelham Buildings; it's a miserable place. But safety there was preferable to danger in a modern flat to which the family had a legal right.

Attacks on Asians, endemic in this area for years, were intensified in the early months of 1976. 'For some time there was a virtual curfew – our people just didn't go out after seven o'clock,' Mrs Mala Dhondi told me. 'The NF created the atmosphere, and a section of the white working-class translated the hate propaganda into action.' (Minority spokesmen are always careful to speak of racist *sections* of the white population.) Mrs Dhondi has a file of nearly 100 attacks; in every case, either hospital treatment was required – for knives are often used – or a member of the Anti-Racist Committee, of which she is secretary, examined the injury. Her total covers the whole East End, with Bethnal Green and Poplar, she says, as the worst areas. However, resistance was organised in Spitalfields where the Asians are most densely concentrated.

In April about 60 white youths, wearing leather jackets and arriving on motor-bikes, gathered in Brick Lane and dominated it for the evening; the Asians all hurried indoors. Mrs Dhondi told me this in order to make the point that it couldn't happen now. Her committee was formed in May and called a meeting at the Naz Cinema in Brick Lane. About 3,000 people attended it (or tried to get in) and then demonstrated outside the Leman Street police station, since the police are regarded as culpably reluctant to bestir themselves. This seems to have impressed the racists. 'They don't clash with us. There are no gang fights – they were never out for gang fights, just to beat up isolated individuals.' Defence groups have been set up in every street; if trouble threatens, 50 men can be there in minutes.

Determined Opposition

It seems to me inevitable and necessary that the minorities should defend themselves – and also press for decent working conditions, decent housing and fair opportunities – by their own efforts. But I also think it a shame that they have to do so. I asked Mrs Dhondi whether the Anti-Racist Committee got any help from white people in the East End. 'No, never. If we got any offers of practical help, we'd be glad. But we've learned to be content if white people just leave us alone.' From the Community Relations staff? 'No, they're useless.' From councillors, who are practically all Labour in the borough? 'Help from them? But we're in confrontation with them all the time.'

The National Front, now being treated with such respect because it stirs things up at by-elections, isn't really so formidable as it would like people to think. The harm it does is precisely to stir things up, to inject irrational hatred in places hitherto free from that element. But at bottom it's a skulking, cowardly, mean little outfit. There's also – from the Notting Dale disturbances of 1958 to the Powell furore of 1968 to this year's flare-up – something sporadic about racism, something that doesn't stand the pace. What's necessary is to oppose it steadily and with determination. From the minority communities themselves we can learn how.

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Dick Taverne

Bill Brand and I

Bill Brand, as many people know, is the hero of a television serial about a Labour MP. The series has been variously described both as the best television play so far about Parliament and as a manual of Marxist propaganda. There is no doubt about Bill Brand's left-wing credentials. He votes against his own government on cuts in public spending; he attacks preventive detention for suspected members of the IRA, champions a work-in at a factory in his constituency and denounces as 'men of blood' the international capitalists who corrupt Labour governments. He even regards the *Tribune* Group ('The Journal Group') as a collection of well-intentioned compromisers prepared to sell out socialism for the elusive dream of parliamentary power. Why then does a 'right-wing', 'elitist', 'reactionary' social democrat like myself cheer him on throughout his tortured struggles against the Establishment?

Because the series not only depicts an MP who is honest, intelligent and real; it also tells us more about Parliament, constituency politics and the Labour Party than the combined writings of most of the Westminster drama critics who masquerade as political commentators.

Trevor Griffiths, the author, is not I feel always convincing in his portrayal of politicians. He cannot draw real portraits of people he dislikes. Jeremy, the sycophantic junior Whip on the make; the Chief Whip himself, a kind of latter-day Mellish from Bloomsbury rather than Bermondsey; above all the arch-enemy Venables, the elegant Home Secretary who has strayed from the senior common rooms of Oxford into the Labour Party – they are all superficial caricatures. Their main dramatic merit is to act as a backcloth to the character and actions of Bill Brand himself. Nevertheless the backcloth shows the weaknesses of Parliament and above all the silliness and the humbug and the cant.

I do not want to dwell on the silliness, the debates in committees on the opening of windows or the turning on of radiators. Far more important is the attitude to votes. To the loud protests of colleagues and opponents alike, Bill Brand declares that votes in Parliament are meaningless. He hates the Bill he has voted for, but he cannot defy every three-line whip. I look back in anger at the charade of so many parliamentary votes. Regularly people voted against their own convictions even on matters of great importance. Pro-Marketeers voted against the European Communities Bill, which was essential to our entry into Europe. Some spoke for the Bill, but voted against. Some abstained. None of us actually voted for what we believed.

Many votes are no more than gestures, believed to be 'good for party morale' or likely to impress constituency activists. I remember the night we voted all night long, without any debates, against the Industrial Relations Bill in 1971, when the Labour Party in Opposition demonstrated its virility by voting even against amendments which had been asked for by the party itself.

If anything the subservience of MPs to Whips is increasing. Few Labour Members support the present Docks Work Regulation Bill, which is violently opposed by thousands of workers whose jobs are to be handed to the dockers or controlled by them. But the Bill goes through the House of Commons because the Whips are on. The Trade Union and Labour Relations Amendment Act is another example. Several members of the Manifesto Group agree with the Opposition that it is a threat to the freedom of the press. Still they voted for it. Even to the *Tribune* Group, party comes first, second, third and last. They would in the end tolerate a level of unemployment greater than a Conservative government would have to accept, just in order to keep the Conservatives out of office.

By the conventional wisdom of the party system, voting, that is voting for the party, is the ultimate test of loyalty, parliamentary effectiveness and political maturity. The Whips' Office used to issue an end-of-term report of good conduct, a 'division record', showing in how many possible divisions one had voted. (Andrew Roth, an unlikely pillar of parliamentary convention, fortifies the myth that voting matters most. He publishes the voting records, as well as the number of questions asked by each MP. No wonder there is a rush to get in Questions at any cost, despite the irrelevance of 90 per cent of Question-time.) As a result, constituency parties and the public, or those of them who care, are encouraged to ignore the work done by MPs in committees, the quality of speeches, the effectiveness of interventions and are taught to judge an MP's record by the standards of conformity. Bill Brand will not play these party games and is censured by his management committee for his defiance.

Griffiths not only takes the lid off Westminster; he is equally revealing in the glimpses he shows us of the constituency pressures on an MP. There are the now familiar attempts by the local party to tell him how to vote. Three cheers for the Bill Brands who refuse to dance as puppets to their masters' strings. But we are also shown, from the MP's point of view, the side of constituency routine which turns him into the local substitute for royalty, opening bazaars and fêtes, judging baby shows, awarding prizes and making after-dinner speeches empty of all content. Some MP's love it; some claim to survive because of it; some feel slightly soiled by always selling a half-phoney image of themselves. None, however, even if they wince, can afford to refuse a role which the public and especially their own supporters expect them to play. So Bill Brand, too, fills his diary at his agent's dictation, with dates of functions he hates or despises. He learns to keep his powder dry for the bigger battles of principle. If you want to be an MP, this is a compromise you have to make.

However, where the series is perhaps unique is in the way it gets under the skin of the Labour Party. Brand's views are to the left of those of most party members, but they are far from atypical among activists. A powerful section of the party, *Tribune* readers for example, share his emotional drive. Where he feels betrayed by the present government, so do they. The bitterness is all the greater because they know it has all happened before – after 1948, after 1966 and now again after 1975. The heady days of the much more 'socialist' manifesto in 1974, of the Industry Bill with Tony Benn and Eric Heffer in charge, of a social contract without an incomes policy, are over. We are back to the realism of 1966-1970, righting the balance of payments, calming the fears of the foreign creditors, controlling wages and cutting public spending, with 10p on school meals and an extra charge for a visit to the dentist's.

Must this always happen to the Left? Within the present limitations on the actions of British governments, yes. The present cuts are the price of over-ambition and the U-turns reflect the lack of realism of the manifesto. After 18 months of pursuing a mirage the Government was forced to face reality. But the tragedy of Brand and his friends is that the world in which Britain must live is incompatible with their aims. The facts of international life, the context of the IMF, the EEC, the GATT and our whole interdependence with the Western industrial world, make a mixed economy the only viable system. Within that context we are also bound to be vulnerable to crises of confidence, to the opinions of foreign holders of sterling and indeed of those who can move themselves, their skills and their assets out of Britain. It is a world with which social democrats within the Labour Party, like the SPD in Germany, can live, because they accept the framework which limits the scope of reform of 'the system'. It is one which the Left reject.

But what if we cock a snook at our treaty obligations and our present friends and establish a siege economy, as the Left demands? I suspect that Griffiths and Brand would be no happier, because they are democrats. We would need more than a few simple controls over imports and the movement of capital. We would end up with detailed physical controls over every aspect of economic life and a kind of iron curtain round this island to stop people, as well as capital, from moving out. The controls would become ever more oppressive and undemocratic. It is no accident that a state-run economy and political freedom have never yet been found to co-exist.

Every now and then I detect the hint of fear in Brand (and Griffiths) that what may succeed the society they want to sweep away will be no improvement. Brand, for example, wants nationalisation of the textiles industry and import controls to save the jobs of workers in his constituency. He may ignore the problem that nationalisation cannot save every uneconomic job, but he is not unaware of the international implications. One of the workers' leaders whom

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he meets is a Pakistani whose relatives back home depend on exports to Britain for their jobs. What price socialist internationalism then?

Brand sees the logic of the parliamentary system. The great question he will have to face is whether he accepts it and compromises his fundamental socialism; or whether he keeps his socialism pure and abandons his life in Parliament.

Donald Gould

The Sane Man's Survival Course

Being alive is a dangerous business, as shown by the fact that life invariably leads to death. There are many roads to quietude. Some are sudden, some are slow. Some are peaceful, some are harsh. Most of us don't choose to ponder upon the inevitability of our own deaths, but a lot of people do worry endlessly about circumstances, habits, symptoms, foods, personal relationships, and all manner of other items which they believe or fear might affect their health and being. A book published this week will prove a cornucopia of grisly facts calculated to satiate the appetite for masochistic imaginings of even the most dedicated hypochondriac. *The Medical Risks of Life* (Penguin Books 95p) is a catalogue of most of the factors which threaten our happiness and well-being as we go about our daily tasks. It has been compiled by Drs Stephen Lock and Tony Smith who are, respectively, editor and assistant editor of the *British Medical Journal*. Those who read it are likely to end up mildly surprised that so many of us survive as long as we do.

The book kicks off with a discussion of the effect of life patterns on health and longevity. Bad omens include being a bastard, or the child of a broken home, or living in a high rise flat, or the divorce or the death of a spouse, or the 'shock' of being released from a concentration camp. But the authors note that not all the experts support the popular assumption that the stress of modern life is a major cause of some of the principal killing diseases in the Western world. They say:

> Any theory that relates the increased prevalence of certain illnesses to the stress of modern life begs two questions: have the illnesses in fact become commoner (or are we just better at recognising them?) and has stress really increased? 'The life of a physician in Birmingham is surely much less stressful than that of a peasant in the Yangtse Valley, with the ever-present menace of flood, famine, pestilence and war; or of the tribesman in equatorial Africa tortured by the taboo and sanction of primitive belief,' as Professor Sir Melville Arnott, a distinguished British cardiologist, once remarked.

It is true that a part of the apparently epidemic increase in the incidence of the two principal killing diseases in industrial society – coronary thrombosis and lung cancer – may be accounted for by improved diagnosis, but numerous studies have shown that emotional stress does produce a greater susceptibility to heart attacks, and to lesser but distressing ailments such as migraine and asthma.

But Sir Melville Arnott's suggestion that a Birmingham consultant leads a less troubled life than that of a Yangtse peasant is surely rubbish, and it suggests how small an understanding many doctors have of the nature of the world outside the semi-monastic community of the healing trade. Peasants don't have to turn out in the early hours in response to a telephone call demanding instant medical aid. Peasants don't find final demands for the payment of enormous telephone, gas, electricity and income tax bills lying on their front door mats when they wake in the morning. Certainly the anxieties and pressures of life in an industrial society are greater and more onerous than those borne by even the underfed and materially deprived inhabitants of simpler societies. There is such a thing as the stress of modern life, and it does make people ill, and it can kill.

The rest of the book is less controversial. It deals with the many factors in our environment and life-style which we know, for sure, can maim and destroy. The crucial thing about this list is that almost all of the hazards named are avoidable – either by a simple choice of the individual, or by executive or legislative action. Road accidents cause a third of all deaths in men between the ages of 15 and 24. World-wide they kill about a quarter of a million people and injure a further 8 million every year. We can't abandon the motor car because we have organised our lives around it, but we could reduce road deaths and injuries dramatically by imposing strict speed limits, demanding much safer if rather more costly vehicles, and passing laws that would hound the criminally careless driver off the road.

Citizens of the prosperous nations commonly eat themselves to death. We know pretty well which foods do harm and which are essential for health and survival. It would be easy to devise a diet which satisfied both the lusts of the flesh and the needs of the body, but we can't be bothered. It could be that at least 80 per cent of all cancers are caused by evil substances in the things we eat, and the air we breath, and the growing number of synthetic materials we use to make life 'easier' for ourselves. Cancer-producing agents are to be found in such inessential props to the good life as pipe laggings, hair dyes, and food colourings. We smoke and drink ourselves to death. It should be a simple matter to find safer alternatives to alcohol and tobacco. All these and many other greater and lesser threats to health are listed in *The Medical Risks of Life*. What the authors don't mention (understandably, perhaps, in view of their background) is the contribution to ill-health made by the members of their own profession. Apart from such inexcusable adventures as heart and liver transplants, practised by the arrogant few, the general run of doctors do immense harm to the public health by the irresponsible fashion in which they distribute powerful modern drugs, of which they have small understanding. The pharmaceutical industry encourages this feckless response to the demands of the sick and suffering. As a result more than half the adult population of Britain, and almost one third of all children, take some kind of potentially dangerous medication every day. Around 30 per cent of hospital patients have some kind of unwanted effect from the drugs they take, and in 5 per cent of hospital admissions a drug has contributed to the condition which brings the patient in.

None of this has to happen. Tony Smith has described his own book 'as a collection of answers to some at least of the fool questions fired at medical journalists on social occasions'. It is also a pointer to actions and attitudes which could almost allow us to dispense with doctors altogether. By and large we could choose not to be ill.

Public Notice

INCOME AT THE LOWER LEVELS

The Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth (Chairman, Lord Diamond) has been asked to analyse the present position and past trends, particularly over the past five years, in the levels and distribution of income from all sources at the lower levels (say about the lowest 25 per cent of income recipients) and to examine the economic, social and other factors which give rise to low incomes, both inclusive and exclusive of incomes derived from social security benefits.

The Commission is, accordingly, seeking evidence on these matters. It is bound by the terms of the Royal Warrant to maintain strict confidentiality about personal information to which it has access and is precluded from disclosing information which would damage the legitimate business interests of any person.

Evidence should be submitted before end-November 1976. Those wishing to do so can obtain fuller information about the scope of the reference and a guide to the areas in which evidence is being sought from the Secretary, Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth, Neville House, Page Street, London SW1P 4LS. Tel: 01-222 8020. Ext. 519.

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London Diary

☐ Two weeks ago Christopher Price wrote a strong article in the NS on Tameside, whose Tory Council was battling to keep five grammar schools which the Government had ordered replaced by comprehensive schools. 'Round two will be argued in the Appeal Court' he ended: If the Tories win, they may even squeeze a few votes out of the subsequent publicity. But the children of Tameside will be the losers.' On Monday the Appeal Judges reversed the decision and sure enough the Tories have done handsomely from the publicity. Will the children of Tameside really be such big losers? Some 240 children out of 800 will have now to be selected for grammar school places, but this could have been done in May had not, in Chris Price's words 'the teachers refused to run an impromptu 11-plus and the town-hall workers refused to handle letters to parents'. And can Chris, a former teacher, really pretend that hundreds of thousands of children have not been the losers from comprehensive education? It is one of those dud ideas that the Labour Party clings to and considers 'socialist' long after they have proved ineffectual, dangerous and unpopular (not just with the 'middle class'). Other examples are city centre development; trade union participation in government; public spending as good in itself; unemployment being more harmful than inflation. Most foreign socialist parties have long abandoned such illusions, if they ever believed in them. As Rhodes Boyson, the Tory MP, has often and gleefully pointed out, the educational systems of Eastern Europe encourage both specialisation and competition. It is typical of the British Labour Party that while trying to destroy the valuable grammar schools it has left to flourish the snobbish public schools, to one of which Jim Callaghan's grand-daughter is to be sent.

☐ A BBC Radio London broadcaster, Denis MacShane, has been sacked because he used a radio phone-in programme to say rude things about Reginald Maudling. Apparently there are so few telephone calls from genuine members of the public that Radio London broadcasters are constantly asked to phone from within the office. It was also revealed that MacShane is a 'militant' of the National Union of Journalists who recently led a strike to get more money for journalists working 'unsocial hours', a concept that startled morning newspaper journalists who must, *ipso facto*, work in the evenings, the 'social' time of the day. Anyway, some of MacShane's colleagues at Radio London came out on strike in his support. This was rash, for the BBC might well be tempted to argue that if the public does not take part in the phone-in programme, perhaps the public does not want Radio London. In which case everyone would be sacked. The London commercial radio stations, too, have found that the city is too big for local broadcasting: it is not a locality. Any London station turns out to be just another national one.

☐ If the blood-stained tyrant Idi Amin is, at last, overthrown, it will not be thanks to help from successive British governments. When the previous President, the mildly socialist Milton Obote, was overthrown, the Heath government and the Foreign Office crowed with delight and welcomed Amin, the bluff ex-sergeant. There are hints, but no evidence yet, that British Intelligence may have assisted Amin's coup d'état. No protests were registered when evidence came out of the first murders and even massacres. When Amin, in August 1972, ordered the expulsion of the Asians, many of whom were British subjects, our Government meekly agreed to assist in their evacuation. Indeed in late September 1972, when Amin was threatening murder against the British, we continued to send him British Leyland armoured cars (see NS 13 October 1972). When the Asians had been expelled, we still did not take the opportunity to break off diplomatic relations. Last year, Amin arrested and threatened to murder a British lecturer, Denis Hills. In response to protracted blackmail, Britain dispatched two senior army officers to plead for Hills's life. Then, to get Hills released, the former Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan himself, went to Kampala and thanked Amin for not having murdered a British citizen. I would not be surprised to hear that in return for Hills's safety we paid Amin some huge bribe. The success of his blackmail over Hills may have encouraged Amin to blackmail the Israelis over the hijacked plane, with the result that he did not relish.

☐ Although Amin is hated in Uganda, he has remained very popular with the British public, in much the same way as another comic character, Lord George-Brown. Why do the easy-going, essentially gentle English take to their hearts such posturing bullies? A Tory MP told me the other day that his constituency party often asked him if he could get George Brown to come and address them. 'I didn't dare risk offending the women members,' he added, 'whom Brown would either have kissed or insulted.'

☐ Watching on TV the fine fourth Test Match at Headingley, Leeds, brought back memories of the outrage last year when the pitch was dug up by 'Free George Davis' supporters. Later Davis was freed from prison and photographed by the press with relatives of the East End criminal Kray twins. The 'Free George Davis' campaign was run by a group of his own relatives, aided by middle-class sympathisers. It is significant that one of those who took part in the Headingley outrage was an American lady sociologist. Although Davis is in the clear, he is by no means a hero to everyone in the East End. One woman, who has lived there all her life, told me: 'When he came out of prison, nobody in the pubs near us was celebrating. Quite the opposite.'

☐ So Parliament has once again blocked the plan for authors' public lending right. I cannot feel too sorry. Such a plan would have meant creating a whole new corps of librarian bureaucrats and would have paid out little to authors. Might it not be better to stop public libraries from buying new books, except works of reference? The libraries served a purpose when an impoverished proletariat had no other access to good literature; why, in this affluent age, should the public expect free books any more than free pop concerts, free football tickets or free television sets? If new books were no longer obtainable in the libraries, people would be obliged to buy them, greatly to the advantage of authors, publishers and book shops. Even the great chain of shops which has a monopoly in most parts of this country, might go back to trying to sell books rather than greetings cards, paper table mats, package holidays and the like. If publishers no longer had to bother with selling to libraries, which take only hard back books, they could then publish new titles only as paperbacks, which are cheaper and more widely read.

☐ Most of us hold strong opinions for or against the white regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa. It is harder to answer which side we would have supported during the Boer War. Would we have joined with Lloyd George, most of the Left and the Irish Nationalists in defending the kaffir-bashing Boers? Or would we have joined with the Tories, Kipling and Rhodes in defending the British mining millionaire capitalists? One cannot wriggle out of an answer by saying 'I would have been on the side of the Africans', for they were not at that time a political force. The author, John Flint, of a new biography *Cecil Rhodes* (Hutchinson £4.75) implies that the war might never have taken place had Rhodes not launched the Jameson Raid in an attempt to drive the Boers off the Transvaal gold-fields. Certainly Rhodes was a disaster. Oddly enough he reminds me of a present-day English politician, a still worse disaster, who like Rhodes is arrogant, petulant, ungracious, prone to giggles and not much interested in the opposite sex. I refer to the last Prime Minister but one.

Richard West

This England

Prizes: £1.50 book token for first entry, £1 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Burying a dead donkey in your garden was a more effective fertiliser for grape vines than using special blood and bone mixture, members of Sanderstead Women's Institute were told at their July meeting. – *Coulsdon and Purley Advertiser* (Brian Huggett)

☐ The Chief Constable of the Thames Valley Police, Mr David Holdsworth, said: 'The presence on the march of trade unionists and teachers from the Open University may have smacked to some of "subversion".' – *Guardian* (F. Singleton)

☐ Although I have voted Tory all my life (I am 72), I shall hesitate next time to vote for a woman leader, however capable she may be. A strong man is needed for leadership today. – *Daily Mail* (D. Bear)

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William Hall

Hard Times by the Seaside

The decline of the traditional seaside boarding house is one of the most striking developments in the holiday trade since the last war. Victor Middleton, in research for the Hotel Catering and Institutional Management Association, points out that the number of holidays taken in guest houses and boarding houses has more than halved since 1960. In that year such holidays accounted for 35 per cent of the total – last year the figure stood at 11 per cent. The signs are that this decline will continue still further.

The demise of the traditional boarding house can in part be explained by the growth of 'self-service' seaside accommodation. This now accounts for 40 per cent of all holidays taken in Britain – more than double the figure for 1950. In part, too, the decline is due to the increasing cost of both labour and food, which has meant that holiday prices in Britain have, in many cases, risen more rapidly than those abroad. The cost of borrowing money to pay for modernisation and compliance with the fire regulations has also caused many to go out of business. Furthermore, and especially this year, there is general economic uncertainty: most guest-house owners would agree that this season has been one of the slowest to start that they can remember.

If guest-house owners were doing well anywhere in Britain, they could be expected to be at their most flourishing in Blackpool. But not so. The local Small Hotels Association remain optimistic about the peak holiday months, but warn that if the present level of business does continue, it will hit the old-style bed-and-breakfast establishments hard. And indeed, behind the Golden Mile is evidence of a tarnish on the guest houses' favourite white paint. In one street, only two out of 40 places proclaimed 'No Vacancies'. 'It makes you feel like giving up,' said one landlady busy cleaning her doorstep. 'Unless it's an exceptional summer, I'll close down after the illuminations. I couldn't stand another winter like the last one.'

According to the owner of one of the many 'Seaviews' (and you can, just) advance bookings have been the lowest that she can remember: 'The trouble is, people don't know whether they'll be made redundant before their holidays.' Over a cup of tea she confided: 'I've had no one in this week. And I've watched Denise's next door, but she's had two.'

At the root of the problem, says Mr Davis, who runs the *'Aston'* in Brighton, is the fact that people no longer want comic hats, seaside landladies and boarding houses. He points out that the expectations of holidaymakers have been boosted by cheap package tours to Spain. So, while he himself can't offer bullfights, he can at least provide facilities not traditionally associated with the seaside boarding house – and at the same price. He, and small hoteliers like him, prefer to call their establishments 'private hotels'. They say it sounds better and hints more fully at the 'extras' provided. The *'Almara'*, for example, keen to dispel the boarding-house image, promises 'No petty restrictions'. Another intriguingly offers 'Hot and cold spring interiors', while down the road one eight-bedroomed private hotel advertises 'Underground Car Park for 500 cars'. (Yes, but it's the public car park just opposite.) Only one, and that way down the list of attractions, stresses the old boarding house values: 'homely and friendly'.

One would expect this trend, towards the small hotel with more facilities, to be taken to its extreme in Blackpool. And it is. The secretary of the Small Hotels and Guest House Association warned me: 'Forget the clogs image, and the boarding house battleaxes. They're on their way out.' He agreed that 'some maternal types' remained in the business, but said that the only development possible in the present economic circumstances was for management-oriented 'hoteliers' to take over.

'Of course there's brass in this trade,' said Billy Rigby, one such entrepreneur who runs the *'Sunnydale'* just off Coronation Street in Blackpool. 'Holidaymakers used to accept any accommodation here, as long as they could go up the tower for a shilling. But now they've got nice chalets in Manchester and they don't want rubbish on holiday.' What they seem to want, according to Billy, is a little bit of Spain on the Fylde Coast. So he provides a potted palm in the doorway, bullfight posters in the dining room and *Viva España* over his hi-fi system. In the evening, he performs a cabaret and at Christmas he treats his guests to his own version of a striptease. His forte, though, is in a knobbly knees contest; by bending them slightly he can guarantee a grotesque pair of winners.

Billy Rigby sold his fish and chip shop ten years ago to buy the *'Sunnydale'*, and since then he has spent £16,000 on modernisation. To improve his facilities, he has lowered the ceiling in the dining room; built a bar, a 'dry lounge', and a reception desk; and installed wash-basins, showers and central heating. But he has also concentrated on smaller details: 'People nowadays don't want to go to a central table to get sauce for their meals. So I've made sure there's a bottle on each table.' The atmosphere of the *'Sunnydale'*, if slightly tinged with Butlin red, is certainly more relaxed than the conventional archetype of the seaside digs: 'Sometimes wives end up in the wrong bed,' he said, 'but I don't say anything, I just bring in the morning tea.' Billy Rigby prides himself on being a trendsetter. Not only was he the first to put an electric sign over the front window, but he was also the first in the street to offer facilities more usually associated with a hotel. 'No guzunders here lad,' were his parting words.

Oddly enough, I found the nearest equivalent to the traditional seaside landlady and boarding house not in Blackpool, but in Brighton. Mrs Sedgington runs a small guest house there, next door to the Edelweiss Private Hotel, itself famed for its front garden dominated by a plastic Wagnerian castle guarded by a squad of gnomes. Mrs Sedgington's hospitality is old-fashioned and somewhat eccentric: at dinner, couples are seated so that no one faces anyone else. Conversation, therefore, is a little restrained. In one corner, a couple whiled away the time between the courses by competing to see who could fold up the neatest serviette. The main dish, steak and kidney pie, prompted a comment from the landlady, as she adroitly balanced apple pie in one hand and dirty plates in the other: 'Gilbert Harding always thought English food was revolting. He hated pies where the crust and the meat were totally separate.' 'Was it him who said, never cut lettuce with a knife?,' one guest volunteered. All agreed the pie was 'very nice thank you dear', as indeed it was.

However, Mrs Sedgington has a nagging feeling, borne out by statistics, that people no longer want the homeliness and other virtues of the old-fashioned boarding house. At one time, she did a good trade with 'Saturday-nighters'. They were easy to recognise; a young man would stand nervously on her doorstep, proffer cash for a room, and then dash back to a woman waiting in the car. 'A give-away that,' said Mrs Sedgington, 'any married woman would

Roger Woddis

War-Dance

Hooray for the Tories of Tameside,
Hooray for the Court of Appeal,
For daring to sully
The name of Fred Mulley
And bringing the bastard to heel!

Three cheers for the wisest of judges,
Lords Denning and Scarman and Lane,
Who found it offensive
To go comprehensive
And knew how to handle a cane!

Hands up, all the pupils now panting
For places at Ashton and Hyde,
Where part of the glamour
Is knowing your grammar
And taking it all in your stride!

Who cares if the parents and teachers
Have now gone away on their hols?
We've beaten the planners,
So up with the banners
And down with the ragged-arsed proles!

Our posture is proud and heroic,
Our battle-cry, 'They shall not pass!'
Our only objective
Is staying selective
(But not irrespective of class).

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have asked to see the room.' But that trade seems to have gone. Her policy now is to build up 'regulars,' mostly, like herself, elderly. If she were young again, she said, she wouldn't keep a guest house. Her overheads are high, and next year she has to spend a few thousand pounds on new fire precautions. 'I could make it pay by working harder, but I'm working around the clock as it is.' She recognises that as her clientele ages, and her costs increase, eventually she'll have to close.

First Person

Arthur Marshall

Modern Luxilife

I'm beginning to feel, selfishly perhaps, that I'm really rather *out* of things. Not, I hasten to say, because of any unkindness or cold shoulders in our delightful Devon village of Appleton. The only cold shoulders we know here are dished up for Monday lunch and are munched with what's left of the mint sauce. Everything here is all communal joviality.

No morning sherry party is ever given by the Bultitudes but I am there, sipping my share. My Cousin Madge would not dream of 'throwing' one of her well-known and widely appreciated clock golf afternoons without my presence. At whist drives I am the first to seat myself alertly at the green baize. No. It's just that newspaper and magazine advertisements excitingly reveal to me that a full, rich and infinitely varied life is going on all over the place and that I am missing it.

Take, for example, Personalised Sausages, home-made and very warmly recommended by the press: 'tasted marvellous' glows the *Sunday Times*, while the *Financial Times* chimes in, rather enigmatically possibly, with 'have fun'. Fun consists of a simple, hand-operated aluminium gadget, herbs, spices, sausage skins and nutritious matter of your own devising to stuff inside them. A few clicks and twirls and hey-presto, a pile of glossy bangers smiles appealingly at you. I hardly dare now to have any guests to stay. I can just picture them at Sunday breakfast coldly asking themselves why I haven't bothered to personalise my sausages. (I thought at first that it meant that one's name had to be stamped on them but a re-reading of the advertisement shows that this, though no doubt a bonus, doesn't appear to be necessary.)

And then, I feel I can hardly face another of those sherry parties because of the wounded looks coming, and rightly, from my host and hostess. In all these years I have never, at Christmas-time, given the Bultitudes a Detachable Moustache Guard ('makes dainty china look even daintier, fits either side of cup'). Colonel Bultitude goes in for whiskers, and a detachable guard, clipped to the Crown Derby, would have been the ideal gift for preventing his wispy embellishment from making messy contact with the bedtime Horlicks. But if, contrite, I invite them in to tea, I have no Telephone Dial Lock to stop them deceitfully putting through an expensive call to Singapore while I am out of the room and preparing the Bee-Zee-Bee honey sandwiches and infusing the P.G. Tips.

How very different my world might have been had I, years ago, taken advantage of the many advertised possibilities, hunting through endless newspapers for pleasing novelties. Instantly a life of unbridled luxury unfolds itself. With my Foot Gloves ('a boon to bunion sufferers') and Ankle Grips ('braces weak joints') firmly in position, I move lithely about, now here, now there, in my genuine Indian moccasins, my important midriff areas secure in their new, vital Athletic Support ('it promotes a feeling of buoyancy'). Pausing for a moment to admire my Japanese Miniature Garden ('complete with tiny pagoda'), my Magnetic Window Cleaner (not, as one initially imagined, a dynamic man with a bucket, but a handy contraption and 'the best thing for windows since glass!'), and, on the nest of occasionals, that tempting bottle of Hostetter's Stomach Bitters, I peer through the Gayline Venetian Blinds, awaiting the Musical Door-chimes that will announce the arrival of the computer-dated girl of my dreams ('There's a Miss Rackstraw to see you').

After beaming a warm welcome to her, my dentures gleaming freshly in the sunlight, I suggest a stroll but first, shall it be the Barathea Blazer ('leisure wear for that informal occasion') or the Bush Jacket ('It's safari time!')? Snug in my All-purpose Mini-Bootees, I push open the 'Chatsworth' wrought-iron gates ('Why should a Duke be the only one to live graciously?'), find some soothing music on my Wrist Radio ('a marvel of minaturised electronics') and, after sweeping the horizon for a few moments with my Commando Binoculars, I draw Miss Rackstraw's attention to the beauty of my lobelias, each and every one drenched in a pungently fragrant anti-pet Shoo! Pussy spray.

Within the house there is much on which Miss Rackstraw can feast her eyes – my Loft Ladder, my continental-style Decorative Shutters ('*Vive la différence*' it rather puzzlingly claims), my Tie Tidy, my Wet Look Undershorts. In the bathroom, there are the Slip-Proof Bath ('self-adhesive shapes put paid to those slip-ups'), the silent plumbing ('noisy loos easily hushed') and, ready at any time to spring into helpful action, my lightweight plastic Portable Bidette ('you're sitting pretty').

Ah, dreams dreams! Even if I temporarily leave dear Appleton and travel to London, that impersonal city, it seems that I need not be lonely. Magazine advertisements dealing with the lighter sides of life assure me that I have merely to step into one of the many Multisex Saunas to find companionship galore. Ladies, and in pairs apparently, fully trained in their exacting art, are waiting to give me an Assisted Shower. Just relax and leave everything to them.

I am not quite clear whether this means that they kindly assist me into the shower, or assist me out of it, or assist me while I am, which I can manage only too well, either scalding or freezing myself. Time will tell. And if I'm not feeling quite up to the mark and don't want to stir from my hotel, the ladies will be absolute bricks and will pop over at any time and assist me to have a shower right where I am. Could friendliness go further?

I'm now going to mend my ways and turn dreams into reality. To that end I have purchased a periodical called *Exchange and Mart*. Evidently it appears, and how blind one has been, every Thursday and has been doing so since 1868. Even on the cover there are eye-catching attractions – a portable welder, a mower hone for sharpening my mower knives, and an ocean-blue, translucent, nylon mesh swimming pool protector, for which I shall have, of course, to build a swimming pool. Within, all is excitement and enticement. The attention is instantly drawn to a Genuine Surplus Flying Suit, just the thing for that Jumbo trip to Jamaica, and it will also serve to put the stewards in their places. Then, for picking off marauding pigeons among my sprouts, what about a Wildcat Hunting Crossbow, complete with bolts ('Not Suitable For Children'), with cheekpiece, thumb grooves and recoil pad, and which, with a range of a quarter of a mile, will enable me to pick off the Bultitudes' pigeons at the same time. And, for good measure, they shall have a Detachable Moustache Guard as well.

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Letters to the Editor

Killjoy's Lament

Sir, I found Corinna Adam's defence of the British teenager's right to his mid-afternoon lager of more than passing interest (NS 16 July) as I have worked behind a bar and know precisely *why*, as she says, 'a majority of managers are opposed' to the extension of licensed hours. One obvious reason is that, when a house is already open from 11.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 to 10.30 p.m. there is very little time indeed to clean a pub thoroughly, remove all the lunchtime trappings and deal with the necessary preparations for the evening – both bottling-up and cellar work. Bearing in mind that the manager could have been up since 8.30 a.m. with cleaning and deliveries from the brewers, and that it was rare for the basic cleaning of ashtrays and glasses to be completed before 11.15 a.m., it becomes apparent that Ms Adam is advocating a form of forced labour for publicans, most out of keeping with the normal tone of your pages.

'Surely the managers and licensees would have enough cash to hire extra staff to reduce the burden?' she opines. In fact, Allied Breweries allowed the manager under whom I worked 10 per cent of the gross takings for staff wages – and that includes himself, for supporting his wife and family (the wife works six lunchtimes and four evenings a week unpaid – and that is sweated labour). With average weekly takings (aside from the recent weather) of £1,300, mostly earned between 8 p.m. and 10.30 p.m. and a staff of casuals to employ out of his own pocket, it is obvious that managers at least are not going to enjoy any increased prosperity by working longer hours. Ms Adam obviously does not know that most bar staff are merely casuals, moonlighting to support their own drinking habits, helping out odd days a week and often spending more in a night than they actually earn. They will not wish to provide the same favour until midnight. It is very noticeable that, for a large proportion of their opening times, pubs tend to hold an unprofitable sprinkling of customers, and many only 'wake up' at 8 p.m. I doubt if many breweries would let their houses close at 5, after seven hours of nothingness, to suit some ingenious rota. With added heating, lighting and staff costs, and less custom, it is hardly surprising that the prevailing opinion is 'Longer hours means a ten-bob pint'.

Ms Adam's final cheek was to see all this as part of a wider class conflict. She forgets that 'working-class drinkers' also have off-licences and pub out-sales available, and if she really wants to see beer freely available at automats and pubs throughout the day and night, as in Germany, she should try cleaning a railway station of all the broken glass and urine that accumulates, or a railway coach of vomit and bent cans. I have tried it, and I would rather that those who cannot hold their liquor – of whatever class – should have at least a few hours a day to dry out in.

WALTER ROTHSCHILD

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Bradford

Sir, It was disappointing that you didn't publish last week any readers' reactions to the article by Corinna Adam in the NS of 16 July. Surely I am not alone in considering it to be very ill-reasoned? There is much evidence showing that road accidents, domestic dispute, sect/gang/ethnic rivalry, and hooliganism are markedly aggravated by (if not largely caused by) people who have been patronising pubs.

A few years ago there was a deliberate advertising campaign to attract young people into beer-drinking, and now one hears first-hand accounts of engineering apprentices on day-release to technical colleges almost writing-off the afternoon sessions because of after-pub-lunch lethargy, and of tipsy teenagers being unable to resist using doorstep milkbottles as late-night missiles.

As for the suggestion that it is a rich man's privilege to drink at home – I believe that more money is spent by the man who drinks regularly in his local than by the man who drinks regularly in his home. The joy that comes from alcohol could do with a little killing-off and being replaced with the joy that comes from more creative pleasure-seeking. How can we respect the opinions of a woman so hooked on hamburger-with-wine that she craves for it even when out with the kids!

HARRY EDWARDS

Sutton
Surrey

Helmut Blows the Gaff

Sir, The non sequitur level in your editorials is rising steeply, and that of 23 July on the question of a loan to Italy may be a new high. Why, because Britain is in receipt of a foreign loan, is it anomalous for her to decide whom she wishes to lend money to in turn? How can the Puerto Rico agreement on Italy reflect the division between the four 'fat cats' of the EEC and the rest, since the agreement was *about*, and apparently excluded, one of the fat cats?

But the substance of the editoral is no more substantial than these rhetorical trimmings: you argue that because the Italian socialists have made a decision about participation with the communists therefore British socialists should be bound by the same decision. What an extraordinary argument! The German socialists opted for the Kaiser's war in 1914. Should we have done the same, or been bound in any way by what they decided?

The heart of the matter is surely this: any advocacy of any aid to a communist-controlled Italy must assume that in some sense communism has changed and mellowed and that Italian communism must necessarily be different from any communism we have hitherto seen. This must be the assumption, because the alternative is wicked and insane: it requires that we would aid a government that would purge and murder and deport like every communist government there has ever been.

So, then, the assumption about the essential difference of Italians must be behind your case. It may be true – Italians certainly believe they are deeply different from everyone else – but it is an enormous risk, isn't it?

YORICK WILKS

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Edinburgh

Dream Child

Sir, Can I be the only reader of the NEW STATESMAN who cringes whenever an article by Anne Bennett appears? I have come to expect a sickening combination of cynicism and sentimentality in Ms Bennett's trite little pieces, and in her latest oeuvre (NS 16 July) she did not fail me.

I have been disturbed by the glib tone of Ms Bennett's articles for some time. On the one hand she seems to wish to pander to the view, current in some circles, that social workers are all incompetent amateurs dabbling in other people's lives with only their supreme arrogance and a little ill-digested theory to help them (and such a view does indeed seem to sum up Ms Bennett's own casework practice). On the other hand she projects a feeling of unctuous concern for the deprived and disadvantaged, which is deeply patronising and insulting to them. Luckily since Ms Bennett's clients are all as she puts it, 'down among the Ds and Es', they are most unlikely to read of themselves in the NEW STATESMAN. Ms Bennett's attitude to her clients is in itself a betrayal of their confidence in her, but for her also to write shallow articles about these clients in a journal with a largely middle-class readership is to betray them twice over.

My own experience as a professional social worker in a local authority setting suggests that practice there leaves much to be desired, and I freely acknowledge that I and my colleagues have much to learn. However, it is *not* common practice for a couple to be approved as local authority foster parents after one perfunctory interview, even where social work staff are both under pressure and lacking in professional training. If such is indeed Ms Bennett's habit, 'Arthur' might well suggest that it is time she undertook some form of professional training. One might doubt, however, whether Ms Bennett will find entry to any such course as easy as she apparently found it to obtain a job with her present ill-starred employers.

The practice of social work in our society, and the way in which local authority social services departments carry out their statutory duties, are obviously of keen interest to all who consider themselves socialists. Surely the NS can find someone a little better equipped to write on these subjects.

SUSAN CONNOR

93 Oatland Towers
Little London, Leeds

Sir, 'Off to the Poly, back you come with the CQSW. It's what we need. Professional status. Improve the image.' Thus Anne Bennett (NS 16 July). As a current student on a CQSW course, with no social work experience, I am quite prepared to believe that social work needs other things (resources?) much more than it needs professional status and an improved image. But I do hope that not all social work is as frustrating, disillusioning and apparently fairly aimless as Ms Bennett makes it out to be. Social work theory (such as it is) may not work in practice, and sociological knowledge and insight may be impossible to integrate into day-to-day social work, but surely there are basic aims and ideals that underpin the actual practice of social work (clichés such as 'helping the client', 'fighting for the rights of the deprived', 'redressing the injustices of an unequal society' spring to mind – they are no less important for being clichés). I confess I can't help wondering whether Ms Bennett's social work 'philosophy' is as impressionistic as her accounts of her social work practice.

After reading 'Dream Child' I was left feeling puzzled about the point of the article, and sorry for Ms Bennett. When the great day arrives for me to stride on to the social work stage with my CQSW clutched firmly in my sweaty palm I shall want people to understand what aims I am trying to achieve and why I am doing social work to try, however inadequately, to achieve them. Sympathy will not be enough.

IAN C. H. HANKINSON

25 Ely Road
Llandaff, Cardiff

Kofi Awoonor

Sir, The American-based Committee to Free Kofi Awoonor is engaged in raising legal funds in an attempt to obtain proper legal counsel

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for Dr Kofi Awoonor, the distinguished Ghanaian poet and scholar and one of roughly 200 Ghanaian citizens presently held incommunicado and in solitary confinement. As a result of the recent passage of a retroactive amendment to a decree first passed in 1973, Dr Awoonor is liable to serve a long prison term for 'harbouring' an individual who, unknown to the public, was apparently being sought by the police.

Dr Awoonor returned home to Ghana in September of last year and was secretly arrested and detained at the end of December. His detention was itself contrary to the military government's own regulations passed in 1972 that require a detainee's name to be published in an Executive Instrument. This is only one minor example of a whole series of disturbing facts that surround the situation concerning many of the present detainees. Many of the worst abuses of natural justice took place before the present show trial of a few of the detainees began and include such matters as not informing them of the charges against them until the day before the trial, only allowing access to lawyers on the day before the trial and then only in the presence of a Special Branch officer constantly named in various reports as having been responsible for the torture of some of the detainees, and the subsequent death of one of them on 2 March.

Should any of your readers wish to contribute to the fund for Dr Awoonor, please send contributions to me and make any cheques out to The Committee to Free Kofi Awoonor.

ROGER GUEDALLA

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Ilford
Essex

Cato Said It First

Sir, The concept of 'Private Affluence and Public Squalor' (NS 23 July) is older than its use by either Anthony Howard or Professor Galbraith as the following quotation from Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* makes clear: '. . . our grand centre of life, our city which we have builded for us to dwell in, is London! London, with its unutterable external hideousness, and with its internal canker of *publice egestas, privatium opulentia,* (to use the words which Sallust puts into Cato's mouth about Rome) unequalled in the world!' (See *The Portable Matthew Arnold,* Viking p.488.) Arnold's next sentence, which is about the *Daily Telegraph,* is also worth a glance.

GRAHAM WICKS

The Forge
Rivenhall End
Witham, Essex

Thunder from the Right

Sir, May I point out to Mr Christopher C. Buxton (Letters 23 July) that in the present bitter struggle between plutocracy and democracy (foretold by Bernard Shaw), none of his proposals could ensure Britain's future as a free, prosperous and democratic nation? Money, whatever movements of it take place, can only be used to buy commodities which are already in existence. Reducing expenditure of any sort cannot possibly add to the stock of commodities on sale. Already two-thirds of the people on earth face starvation. We may join them sooner than we think, unless we can plan our economy for the benefit of the community instead of the money-lender.

Only twice in the present century has Britain achieved economic stability with a reasonable standard of living. Oddly enough, both occasions were when we were at war, and public expenditure was at its highest. Writing in 1932, Bertrand Russell remarked on the increase in the general level of physical well-being in Allied countries during the first world war, in spite of the withdrawal from productive occupations of all those engaged in fighting or war work of all kinds. He also pointed out that the significance of this was obscured by finance. Wholesale borrowing created the illusion that the future was nourishing the present, as though a man could eat a loaf of bread which does not yet exist. In our stupidity we base our economy on this impossible assumption, and as a result repeatedly find ourselves facing some fresh economic crisis.

Free Enterprise had its fling in the 19th century. Its heyday lasted just so long as Britain held the monopoly in a seller's market. Inevitably, our customers went into business themselves and became our bitterest rivals, all striving for 'economic growth', all trying to do each other down and sell each other the same things, with the chaotic results we know so well today.

We may soon be forced to try and subsist on our own agriculture. Let us make sure, through public ownership, that the new-rich oil sheikhs do not buy up all our agricultural land first.

TREVOR WIDDICOMBE

1 Yardley Park Road
Tonbridge
Kent

Entebbe and After

Sir, If Paul Johnson wishes to write about Africa (NS 9 July), may I recommend him to study contemporary writers such as John Hatch and Basil Davidson rather than Conrad? Perhaps they could tell him that Kenya is not 'one of the last civilised regimes left in black Africa'. In East Africa alone, Tanzania and Zambia surely deserve some praise for their attempts to build a socialist society. Mr Johnson might also reassess his attitude to pre-colonial Africa.

While the least civilised country is unquestionably South Africa (incidentally Israel's ally), can Europeans really afford to talk about the rest of Africa's reverting to barbarism and savagery'? I abhor Amin's regime as much as Mr Johnson does but that does not make him a purely African phenomenon. In 1939, with Hitler, Franco and Stalin in power, would Mr Johnson have written of 'the power of the [European] environment to reject civilisation and recreate ancient tribal tyrannies'? And I wonder how he sees the present trend in South American regimes.

ANNE ASANTE

West Africa Secondary School
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Accra, Ghana

Beckmesserish

Sir, Hans Werner Henze was notably unimpressed with English music critics on the occasion of the Glyndebourne premiere of *Elegy for Young Lovers* in 1961, particularly those who failed to comprehend the shape and form of the piece. Should he come across the piece of vindictive spleen, which cannot be dignified by describing it as music criticism, by Bayan Northcott in your issue of 16 July, his opinion will doubtless be confirmed.

Northcott writes: 'The plot follows the downfall of a great empire through the eyes of one of its generals.' If he really thinks that this is what *We Come to the River* is about there would seem to be little point in trying to explain it to him, but even a cursory reading of the text would show that this is by no means the case. He goes on to talk of Henze's tragic failure to grow up as a composer. If by this he means that he cannot trace the development of Henze's work from, say, the first to the sixth symphony, from *Boulevard Solitude* to *The Bassarids,* from the early songs to *Voices* and the general deepening of feeling and techniques which brought forth the masterpiece that is *Das Floss der Medusa,* then I seriously suggest that Northcott is in the wrong calling and that he should take up some other profession before it is too late.

Certainly *We Come to the River* is a complex work demanding an intense concentration, a keen intellect and a probing mind. By his recourse to generalised abuse it would appear that Northcott was unable or unwilling to provide these attributes. I find it sad and regrettable that such Beckmesserish incomprehension should find public utterance in the columns of the NEW STATESMAN, where arts matters are usually treated in a more responsible manner.

MICHAEL MARCUS

19 Ryecroft Road
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Kent

Nuisance Value

Sir, Since Kingsley Amis started the ball rolling you have been printing letters griping about bad English, so hopefully (note the rare correct use of this word!) I am writing to protest at the constant misuse, in your journal and elsewhere, of the term 'nuisance value'. In an interesting and other wise well-written article (NS 16 July), Corinna Adam writes of 'the specific responsibility to take into account the "comfort and convenience" of those working or living near the pub or club, so that any potential nuisance value could be considered'. What she means is not 'nuisance value' but just 'nuisance'. 'Nuisance value' is a military term applicable to a weapon or operation which, while incapable on its own of deciding the issue of a conflict, can have a useful harassing effect on the enemy. Since it is in nobody's interest that pubs should be a nuisance to anyone, it is nonsense to talk of their nuisance *value.*

Similarly, the other week Donald Gould was writing about the nuisance 'value' of dogs, though he didn't mean to suggest that even the most inconsiderate of dog lovers actually wants his pet to be a nuisance.

JOHN FRASER

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Versoix
Switzerland

Countdown to the 'Breeder'

Sir, I have been shocked and surprised that none of your correspondents has commented on Jeremy Bugler's superb article 'Countdown to the "Breeder"' (NS 2 July). Now, last Sunday, the *Observer* has taken up this issue which concerns – more than any other – our health, our safety and our liberty. And not only ours but our grandchildren's.

What price the public participation offered so admirably by Tony Benn if no one helps him resist the menace to our future of 'the plutonium society'?

STANLEY PIGOTT

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Outraged

Sir, I was very upset by your political correspondent's article last week about Conservative politicians he doesn't like the look of – not so much because I know and like Nigel Lawson, as because James Fenton's language comes uncomfortably close to the tone of fascist or racist literature. Abuse like this degrades anyone who reads it, and I don't understand how you came to publish it.

HILARY SPURLING

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BOOKS & ARTS

Jonathan Raban

Night Out at the Blitz

Living Through the Blitz by TOM HARRISSON
Collins £5.00

It only needs a tube train to come to a hissing stop between stations, or a spell of freak weather like the Great Fog of 1962 or our recent heatwave, or a temporary breakdown in public services like an electricity cut or a bus strike, for a bubble of nostalgic elation to burst in a rush of excited chatter among strangers. The word 'blitz' is passed from mouth to mouth, a talisman; and it is nearly always pronounced with a curious tenderness, like the name of a dead lover. For people of my age (my own memory begins with a dimmish picture of a VE-day bonfire on a village green), the facts of the blitz have become so softened and distorted in their passage through a labyrinthine echo-chamber that they are now as remote and mythologised as the ancestral deeds of valour recited by some Anglo-Saxon *scop*. Once upon a time in the days of the monsters, our fathers and mothers did things wonderful to tell. Here, in this very hole in the ground, they withstood the wrath of Grendel's dam, and it was all so brave and fine and companionable that I am afraid you would not understand.

With the publication of *Living Through the Blitz* we have no excuse for not understanding. Tom Harrisson's Mass-Observation outfit was in many respects a slightly dotty enterprise – a Dad's Army of amateur journalists and autobiographers scouring the country for 'overheards'. Its hybrid roots spread out into the documentary cinema, the proletarian novel, the Federal Writers' Project in the USA, prelapsarian market research and (Harrisson's own pet subject) ornithology. It was as thoroughly English and of its period as dandelion wine, the stamp collection and the fretwork set. Mass-Observation 'statistics' in particular (like the table listing factors 'regarded as keeping up one's spirits, in order of frequency') have the ragged innocence of Bisto kids. Yet the documents collected by the team – now safely stored in a special archive at Sussex University – are pure gold. Harrisson's book is based on just a tiny fragment of the whole archive, but it is a fragment of astonishing range and depth, an enormous patchwork of first-hand, on-the-spot reports by ordinary people who wrote in to say what it looked like and how it felt when the bombs fell. Harrisson himself had the kind of outgoing intelligence and quick, instinctive sympathy which would be creditable in a fine novelist, but he was afflicted by a prose style which would bring into disrepute even a parliamentary sub-committee on an off-day. Few books could survive being written in sentences like 'In so far as, clearly, government wished people to stay in habitable dwellings, trekking was a defect in leadership all the way down the line'. *Living Through the Blitz* does. Somehow Harrisson manages to muddle through the chaos created by his own private war against the English language. Despite a lot of really frightful writing, his book emerges, bloodied, mutilated, but still indisputably a triumph.

For it reveals that, in the blitz, society came face to face with its unacknowledged self, and found there something so dangerous, and so exciting, that we are still living with the consequences of the strange encounter. Whatever it was that people saw in damp Anderson shelters, in the caves at Chislehurst, and on the Underground platforms, it has entered the collective unconscious, from where it continues to exert an important influence on all our thinking about the place of the individual within society.

To begin with, the effects of the blitz were reassuringly predictable. Harrisson's observers reported the kind of behaviour that I would expect of myself if I were ever to land up in such circumstances: torn nerves, fright, insomnia, enuresis, a lot of frenzied rushing about and some cowering behind locked doors, the occasional, quickly quelled, fit of hysteria, a tendency to giggle and to cry. At the outbreak of war, some of the intelligentsia said that they would kill themselves and their families rather than face the bombing. What the Government feared most was civilian panic. Herbert Morrison (who was first head of the LCC, then Minister of Home Security) was the chief spokesman for the view that morale in the cities was essentially dependent on effective civic administration. The blitz was to be the supreme test of whether a mass of tired, scared, bereft people could be made to hold together as members of a still-functioning and productive society.

It proved to be such a test; but the results when they came in were so eerie that it was, and perhaps still is, impossible to know whether to take fright or consolation from them. No one, for instance, had predicted a response like this one, from a girl in Hampstead who concluded her brilliant account of being blown across a room by the blast of a bomb with the observation:

> It seems a terrible thing to say, when many people must have been killed and injured last night; but never in my whole life have I ever experienced such pure and flawless happiness.

Nor was this just a piece of NW3-ery. A 50-year-old button maker, who had been bombed out twice, was asked if he would like to be evacuated. He replied, 'What, and miss all this? . . . There's never been nothing like it! Never! And never will be again.' A woman spoke of London: 'I have grown fonder of the place since the blitz began . . . I wouldn't live anywhere else.' A girl of 18 who'd been evacuated from the East End wrote: 'I am longing to get back to London after June when I have taken Higher Schools, to be in it . . .'

Once they had made that frightening crossing from dull, safe peacetime normality to the exacting and dangerous new world of the blitz, many people were astonished to find themselves registering an intense joy in their experience. It was like moving from reality into fiction, with all the exaggerated brilliance, the swift and consequential action and the mercifully foreshortened sense of the future, of life 'in a book'. The landscape around them had been turned into scenery fitting for high drama, and the diarists record its searchlights, fires, craters and ruined churches with adjectival relish. When they described their own lives, literary metaphor came naturally to them. In the heightened reality of the blitz, incidental conversation turned to dialogue, ripe with expressiveness and wit. After a raid on Plymouth, the following 'overheard' was picked up in a pub:

> 1st Man: Where's the gents?
> 2nd Man: Everywhere's the gents now.

The language – of both the observers and the observed – continually testifies to the fact that through the worst of the blitz people were finding that they had, quite unintentionally, tapped a source of personal vitality which was denied them in ordinary civilised life. Like the girl in Hampstead, they were often torn between pride and shame at the discovery.

To the dismay of the Government, the structure of urban social life did begin to creak and shift when 'trekking' became widespread. Plymouth people put up tents on the edges of Dartmoor; from Southampton, they disappeared each night into the New Forest; Londoners commuted to suburban refuges like Chislehurst Caves. As Harrisson points out, trekking was not the result of panic; it was a resourceful private solution to an unattended public problem. Since the government had committed itself to 'civic' measures, it stonily ignored the trekkers, presumably in the hope that they would eventually tire themselves out with travelling and stay home.

Where individuals and families proved themselves endlessly able to adapt to and even thrive in the blitz, the great brittle web of social administration did not. In some cities there were occasions when it looked as if the whole thing was going to collapse. In Southampton, the mayor turned trekker, leaving each afternoon on the 3 p.m. train for his rural hideaway. The town clerk wandered feebly around the city, silent and disconsolate in his mackintosh. A group of RAF officers, enraged by this apparent breakdown of civic leadership, organised a *putsch* and temporarily took over the running of the emergency services.

For social institutions, there were no saving distractions in the near-at-hand. The private citizen could concentrate his thoughts on walking the dog, or getting the roast in the oven, or stopping the leak in the roof with a torn tarpaulin, or pausing to admire a new wonder in the gutted landscape, like the famous Plymouth clock which went on keeping time on the first-

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floor mantelpiece of a house which had been blown to pieces around it. He could take a just pride in the destruction. People were furious when the BBC failed to name their streets and towns after a raid; they felt they were news and wanted the world to know it. But from the windows of the town hall, the administrators could only gaze at the sheer expanse of the devastation, and despair. Local government got no charge from the sense of being there on the stage in the middle of the fifth act.

There was something profoundly frightening in all this; and both government and people recoiled with the shock. A vast number of ordinary people had left their homes and lived the intense, moment-to-moment life of the nomad. They had tasted atavism, and found it not nearly as bitter or disgusting as they'd expected. They had seen that the basic structure of society is frangible, a series of breakable arrangements that are wholly dependent on co-operation and consent. As soon as the war was over they voted for more government, and we have been living with more and more government ever since.

The truth of the blitz is perhaps safest left in symbols, like the halted tube train or the power cut – small, temporary social breakdowns which do not threaten to become an engrossing reality. Or it is explored in nostalgic fictions, like that oddly wistful TV series, *The Survivors*, which pretended to describe the future but actually paid sentimental homage to a mythical past when people made their own improvised, ad hoc society, and it worked.

Alan Ryan

The Lion Tamer

Essays in English History by A. J. P. TAYLOR *Hamish Hamilton* £6.50 and *Penguin* 95p

Essays in English History provides an occasion for A. J. P. Taylor's lay admirers to barge in on his 70th birthday celebrations and thank him for his contribution to the gaiety of intellectual life. The distinction of his recent *Festschrift* is, of course, the best of all possible testimonials to his work, but the enjoyment of those who have been educated, entertained, teased and maddened by his reviews and lectures may count for something too. Most of the essays reprinted here were addressed to lay audiences in the first instance – there are reviews from the NS, Third Programme talks, commemorative essays from the *Manchester Guardian*, a nostalgic account of the vanished Manchester which first appeared in *Encounter*, and so on. As for the more strictly academic essays, such as the long account of the diplomatic skirmishings which led up to the Fashoda incident (reprinted from the *English Historical Review*), there is no danger that academic historians have failed to notice them in the past two decades, especially since all but four of these pieces are here reprinted for the second time, after featuring in earlier volumes of collected essays.

One of the pleasures which these essays yield is fully available only to that, happily numerous, body of people who have heard Taylor lecture, either live or on television. He is evidently very proud of the fact that he is the only lecturer who has ever been let loose without notes or visual aids to face the cameras for 30 minutes on end. I think the performance in the lecture room was almost more impressive; the histrionic technique could expand beyond the limits imposed by the little square screen. With his audiences in Oxford, there was usually a certain tension: Taylor's lectures were at nine in the morning, even in the middle of winter, and one could almost hear the audience muttering that if they were going to get to a lecture at that time it had better be worth it. But the audience filled the largest lecture hall in the place, and the lecturer wore the smile of the lion tamer who had no doubts at all about his ability to get this sullen brute to stand on its hindlegs, lick his hands and jump through intellectual hoops.

My cynical friends knew for a fact that all the lectures were minutely written out, learned by heart at dead of night, and practised in front of a mirror when doors and curtains were firmly shut. The delivery never suggested anything of the sort; one mannerism in particular carried total conviction. When he was at a loss for a crucial phrase, or a name, or a figure, Taylor would search the middle air and, on seeing what he wanted, involuntarily grab at it. As for visual aids, he may have scorned them for himself, but he provided them for us – as anyone will remember who ever saw the mime that accompanied the claim that 'Baldwin . . . never *read* books . . . used to *sniff* them . . . break their backs and sniff them'.

I'm not sure whether anyone could profitably analyse Taylor's historical preoccupations in the hope of finding anything elaborate or articulate enough to be called a theory. There are obvious themes round which much of his work revolves; here, for instance, Palmerston and Lloyd George are both treated in terms of their lack of party support, and the idea that British politics in some sense needs a two-party system, and that political successes are usually good party men, underpins several of the essays. But it is inconceivable that whatever guiding thread it provides could be put in the form of a law about British politics – and equally inconceivable that Taylor himself would be tempted to look for any such law. His opening essay on 'Fiction in History' suggests that historians are essentially story-tellers, committed to telling the truth about the past, but unable to believe that any version of events is likely to gain more than temporary credence. He declares himself 'content to repeat the words with which Geyl finished his book on Napoleon: "History is an argument without end."'

This unconcern with trying to establish a general theory of any particular sort makes it hard to know whether Taylor has changed his mind on anything of importance in the 30 years covered by these essays. An essay of 1952, reflecting on the 50th anniversary of J. A. Hobson's *Imperialism*, for instance, seems to conclude that the fact that many people lost money on overseas investments is enough to discredit Hobson's thesis – power, not profit, was the driving force of imperialism, and the man we should fear is the man with an ideology in one hand and a gun in the other; 20 years later, these observations are said to be essentially irrelevant. If most people lost money on overseas investments, and the nation as a whole got a very bad bargain indeed, some people did very well out of imperialism, and these lucky few could set national policy, and 'hire journalists and historians to bamboozle the many'. Is it only that Taylor changed his mind about the moral he wanted to draw, or did his view of the explanation of imperialism change too? Again, the occasional off-hand references to Irish policy of successive British governments, along with the long review of Brian Inglis's study of Roger Casement, have the same unsettling effect – it is always clear to Taylor that the solution to any Irish difficulty is for the English to withdraw from the island, but, whether he is saying that the Irish will then settle their differences quietly, or merely that the British presence will not reduce the quantity of blood spilled, is less clear.

But this is no occasion for carping; if one threw out everything else, this volume would still contain some absolutely dazzling sketches of individuals and their impact on British history – a wry, sympathetic but exasperated account of George VI worrying himself to death, unsparing savagery whenever Asquith appears on the scene, an unabashed defence of the view that Churchill was, indeed, 'the saviour of his people' and rightly revered for it; Macaulay is celebrated in prose which glitters like Macaulay's own and Neville Chamberlain more sombrely presented as the man on whom fortune never smiled. This, together with his boundless belief in the superiority of the decent, patient English people to almost all their rulers, produces a peculiarly invigorating kind of political history. It makes one grateful for the energy which has given us so much, and happy that it seems quite undiminished.

Edward Pygge

KO-OK

The Fight by NORMAN MAILER *Hart-Davis, MacGibbon* £3.95

I seen Mr Mailer around plenty times at fights. He tends to always have a good seat. He is the kind of guy treats guys with respec and will bring out a gang of stories about his old pal McIsmo. I would kind of like to meet old McIsmo he sounds the berries. As we say. Any how Norman – thats Mr Mailer – is a funny guy.

Well at that there is a lot of hoo-ey and hog-wash in Mr Mailers book this time. They send him to Africa to cover the Foreman-Ali fight which was all over some time back. Before Ali moved on to pasteurs new

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like getting kicked in the leg by a giant Jap. But Mr Mailer is with Muhammad Ali all the way and I wouldv been for Clay to if and he did not have to make that stupid name-change (a good American couldv called his self Muhammad R. Lee, for Chris-sake). Nobody is saying Muhammad is not a great fighter lease of all George Foreman who has been in a position to know e.g. the horizontal position. But Ali is a Black Muzzlem so I say can we trust either of him. However I am fooling when I say that.

Well before we get to the fight we get to go through a lot of stuff about Mr Mailer how he dont go ape for Zaire where he is and his hotel and etc. and how the Black guys from the States greeting him with open arms saying 'you're the Champ among writers' and etc. but then keeping him at arms length. Well whaddya know before to long he commences to catch the blues from these people but instead of singing about it he goes out and gets stoned and starts in to do crazy things like swinging from balconey to balconey on the outer wall of his hotel which is seven floors up at 4 a.m. in the morning. He thinks this is going to bring Ali luck. The guy is crazy but you have to hand it to him least thats what he wants you should say. Mr Mailer has five wives and seven kids and incidentally their ali-moneys was all hanging by a thread here.

Well as the Eve of the fight dawn there is plenty on Mr Mailers mind, he has been reading in some books where it says about Bantu philosophy and all and he is in the picture pretty good when it comes to Bantu philosophy so much so that he can make you think the Coming Battel is between he and Mr Mobutu which is the Pres. of Zaire and not Foreman and M. Ali. Also he goes for a training run with M. Ali in the 'oui small hours' as we say however Norman (Mailer) have to pack it in after a mile half on account of he is 51 and no slouch when it comes to getting a round a slug of booze i.e. rums, Buck Hardys and Cokes, Dyk-queeries and etc. He beleives at this point in time that Foreman has what it takes to take Ali out but something inside of him says Ali will hopefully get to be Champ again, maybe it is the same something makes Mr Mailer creep a round balconeys a hundred feet up I dont know. Like I said Mr Mailer is a lawn to him-self.

Well the fight finely comes round and I am here to tell you if I could write about the fight game the way Mr Norman Mailer writes about this activity I would notv stood a round in rings so many years getting my face beat off. Some of Mr Mailers ring-side remarks will send riffles through your scalpe i.e. 'The whites of Ali's showed the glaze of a combat soldier who has just seen a dismembered arm go flying across the sky after an explosion.' A man who can make you see pictures in your head you do not wish to see is maybe a great writer like Mr Mailer. He agress with me that Ali's tactix in this fight laying up on the ropes and etc. and getting beat up on by the World's Champ, was crazy, well I have tried it and woke up on Tuesday next. But it certainly was a wonderful en-counter and all who saw it was a privelege which includes most all of us via the Saturilte link, and Mr Mailer is the only man packs the punch to put it over with a wow. I like his crack about a guy switches to southpaw 'It has something of the shift of locus which comes from making love to a brunette when she is wearing a blonde wig. Of course, Ali has red wigs too.' A shift of locus is like an all-change situation, which it certainly is when a guy goes southpaw on you.

Well if I have any complains it has to be (a) no pictures and (b) to much grizzly stuff about Norman's insides and (c) more grizzlier stuff about the Black communitys. Just because they producing great Athalates who will beat the sox off of us for the force-able future Norman (Mailer) seem to treat them like they was some rival gang come over from Harlem to Hoboken or wherever it is Mr M originates out of. Hell, the black fighters been beating up on me for years and I bear no grudge is what I say. Maybe this is un-fair on Mr Mailer but I thought I would throw that in on account of it is Bison Tenniel year.

David Leitch

Bittersweet

Beer and Skittles by RICHARD BOSTON *Collins* £3.50

Some time in the expansive Sixties I wrote a mordant account of the 'pub anglais' craze in Paris, entitled 'Down by the old le sir Churchill's'. The French, so my thesis went, had erected these pitiful hybrids, neither pub nor café nor bar, for reasons of snobbery and ignorance. I deplored the participation of British brewing conglomerates in this woeful exercise and suggested the low-camp décor was meant to distract the punters from the prices charged and, not least, the poisonous brew they were calling 'vrai bitter'. For all their manifest faults I did not feel the French deserved to pay five francs for a pint of iced soda water in which old pennies had been left to maturate.

In my innocence I assumed the brewers had designed this stuff exclusively for the French market. Their motives, I assumed, were greed and a secret wish to poison General de Gaulle. Only later, in London, was I to discover that the identical rubbish was now on sale everywhere. More astonishing yet, on all sides apparently knowledgeable looking boozers were guzzling it down without anathematising the name of Watney's. The experience induced that same kind of existential despair which comes from talking to a working-class Tory. True decadence, I decided, comes when all of the people can be fooled all of the time, and the collective will is so enfeebled that the suckers actually subsidise the process.

Perhaps the chief merit of Richard Boston's book is the section entitled 'Modern Times', where he describes and analyses this enfeebling process. Three-quarters of

LEN DEIGHTON
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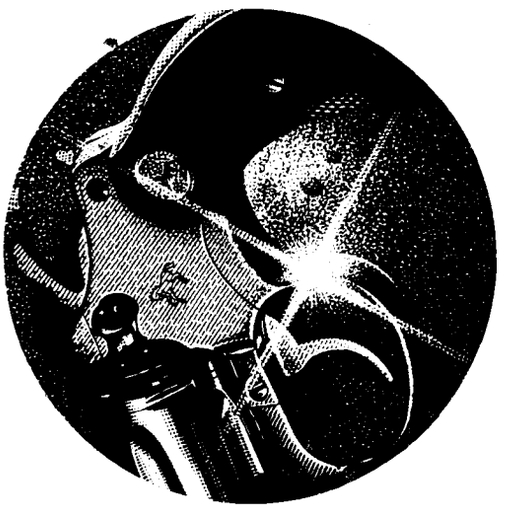

Jonathan Cape / £3.25

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British beer is now produced by seven companies. In 1960, when John Vaizey wrote his study of the brewing industry advocating 'big units', there were 'still 540 breweries being operated by some 310 companies, and about one-third of the beer was produced by 52 large firms'. The arguments he advanced in favour of 'giantism' – low prime cost, more efficient brewing, reduction of waste – were perfectly attuned to the *zeitgeist*.

Soon 'antiquated' small breweries were being closed, and old pubs were being demolished with exemplary vim. Since proper beer has a limited life, it was necessary for the chemists to invent a suitable *ersatz* which could be transported long distances and handled by unskilled staff. They came up with 'stable' or 'dead' beers; thus keg and lager. They cost more and tasted sweet, but since the kids had money and were assumed to have no discrimination, this presented no problem that could not be solved by the ad-men. Massive promotion raised keg beer from 1 per cent of the market in 1959 to 20 per cent today. Keg costs more than traditional cask bitter, giving the brewers a profit margin 50 per cent higher.

The crucial issue, as Mr Boston points out, was a marketing one: persuading the customer to accept a national product that suited the mammoth brewers' convenience. The underlying assumption was one of contempt. The consumers were morons. They would happily gargle in any rubbish – even Harp lager – as long as you told them it was manly, or promoted togetherness, or some other nonsense.

Happily, Camra (the Campaign for Real Ale, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Herts) now has 30,000 members, patronising such honorable brewers as Adnam's of Southwold, Brakspear's of Henley and Greene King's of Bury St Edmund's. Sales of their genuine draught beer continue to rise. Mr Boston's authoritative and literate survey of beer throughout history thus ends optimistically, instead of in a hopless, fizzy limbo.

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Richard North

Home Rule

Housing By People by JOHN F. C. TURNER *Marion Boyars* £4.95 and £2.25
Land For the People edited by HERBERT GIRARDET *Crescent Books* (distributed by *Prism Press*) £1.20
Radical Technology edited by GODFREY BOYLE and PETER HARPER *Wildwood House* £3.25

There are lots of Good Things about radicals: one of them is that they tend to write short books. Perhaps they have been heeding Friends of the Earth, and the alarming statistics about a forest area the size of the UK being gobbled up annually to provide the paper which the world uses for wrapping, wiping and writing. They may also be aware that the unradical world has a pretty low threshold of irritation when it comes to being told to pull in its belt, merge its elitism in a new kind of decentralism, or even – horrors – rely less on the motorcar. Whatever the reason, in a pattern set by the luminously clever Ivan Illich (whose *Tools for Conviviality* makes a slim 125 pages in its Fontana edition), John Turner's *Housing By People* sets out its starting points and conclusions with admirable brevity, though an occasional excess of cybernetical zeal clutters the text with mad word-diagrams.

Mr Turner dryly notes that architects who design big planned estates tend, for their own housing, to live in the muddled, evolved environments which they so often knock down to make room for superblocks. He notes the vandalism with which disaffected tenants assault their new homes, and the awful cash crisis which besets public housing programmes. But most of all he celebrates the human capacity to cherish what we have done for ourselves and to look everybody else's gift horses unflinchingly in the mouth.

The analysis deserves the label 'radical' not only because it fulfils the root-and-branch requirement, but also because it fits that bundle of ideas which has been gaining in coherence and evidence over recent years, and which has been allowed to appropriate the word, since no one else wants it. (The radical voice is increasingly listened to: a little over a week ago, John Turner and Conrad 'do-away-with-architects' Jameson talked at the Royal Institute of British Architects' conference.) With others in the tradition of Cobbett and Kropotkin, notably Colin Ward, Ivan Illich and Schumacher, Mr Turner (who teaches at the Architectural Association) sees the failure of large-scale government provision of services as an institutional failure. They see it as hopeless to provide from the top and centre what will be used variously and complexly, away from the centre and out of touch with it. Such provision, they argue, only breeds expensive bureaucracy, extravagant technology and definitions of physical standards which are ostensibly high but actually counter-productive of human satisfaction. Of course, they often argue from Third World contexts (*Housing By People* is full of Mexican case studies); but it is part of the radical contribution to see the parallels between the rich and poor societies of the world. There are striking similiarities between the consumer-satisfaction, and the near-illegality, of shanty-building in Britain (pre-1947, and noted in *Radical Technology*), and Mexico City.

John Turner's solutions to the crisis he describes are to encourage whoever is working at alternatives (he cites convincing cases of initiative by individuals); bring power down to local level; and impose limits on the sort of technology which can be brought to bear on the construction of a building. This is very much in line with Illich's seminal notion of limits of consumption, whereby societies and individuals set upper limits to how much energy (or equipment) should be employed on the fulfilment of a human gaol, so that world resources can be husbanded and the institutional framework in our lives can be reduced. Of course, it makes no difference here whether one's talking about housing, transport, medicine or food.

Land for the People is a collection of essays describing the inefficiency of our farm-economy, by which vast energy inputs are required to harvest a diminishing return in food. It argues that agriculture can support more people, and that there will be an inceasing army of them ready to reverse the demographic drift towards cities of the last 200 years or more, providing they will be able to work as nearly as possible on their own account, rather than in traditional master-and-men relationships. One of the essays, by Robert Waller, echoes a theme of Mr Turner's, that land cannot properly be owned, only its use be taxed for the community. Others describe a Britain under pressure from foreign food suppliers, short of fuel, and – given luck – coming to its senses with upwards of a million new farmers tilling the dung-enriched soil. How you react to this utopia depends on whether you are a hallo-sky-hallo-clouds romantic or not. There are quite a few of them about.

If perchance you decide to go back to nature (always assuming she's still there), and contemplate living in a shack, or popping a windmill on your roof, then *Radical Technology* might be the alternative workshop manual for you. More of an illustrated bibliography, really, with homilies and some interviews with radical luminaries thrown in. It doesn't replace, but is a useful adjunct to, the extraordinary *Alternative England and Wales*, brought out by Nicholas Saunders last year, which is about the size of a telephone directory and quite as useful.

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Alan Brownjohn

Bad Dreams

Dialogues etc by GEORGE BARKER *Faber* £1.95
The Bearing Beast by PATRIC DICKINSON *Chatto/Hogarth* £2.25
The Noise of the Fields by HUGH MAXTON *Dolmen Press* £1.95

George Barker's title is a clear echo of the title of John Berryman's posthumous poems, *Delusions, Etc.* But that is the nearest he gets to the American poet. His elegy on Berryman is no grand celebration of a dead master or friend, such as Berryman himself penned frequently, but an evocation of 'the sigh of Everyman' for 'the rot and stuff called living'. Purest Barker, then, and once again no delusions about life and death (or Love and Fame) but plenty of dialogues: between poet and joker, instinct and intelligence, formal severity and a dark kind of slipshod exuberance. This is the mixture of wines and poisons as before, but how splendidly he does it.

For 25 years, since poets mainly ceased to do it his way, Barker has been a nudging presence at their elbows, telling them to risk naked feeling and tenderness. His influence has been stronger than he might credit, and it crosses the generations: something of his meditation on the eternal verities and terrors comes out in the work of Peter Porter, his weird balladry is updated in Pete Morgan. But no one, thank goodness, actually mimics the essential Barker blend. The 'metaphysics of dirt' turn up in the first poem of the new book with the reminder that Barker is *the* poet of puritanical extremes constantly and intimately connected:

> Where were you when four horsemen rode
> out of Apocalypse?
> I lay in bed with a Paddington whore
> counting her umpteen tits.

For all that the gardens of Psyche may be ravished, and the Head Hunter lying in wait, good old human sensuality can still hold out against the knock of the Angel of Death: 'Who would not sooner/caress the breasts of his wife on her twenty-first birthday/than open the door?'

Every Barker book has its quota of erratic or spoilt poems. He can turn a paradox better than an epigram, be prolix as well as tartly concise. In *Dialogues etc*, as usual, the more coherently structured poems are the best: the eight 'Dialogues of Gog and Magog' and the hideously regulated fantasy of 'Pascal's nightmare', which is the later Barker at his most chilling:

> the wry-necked
> executives and hairy
> con men, the strumpets
> rubescent, the pornos
> weary of fucking, the
> visions with golden
> locks staring into
> cracked lenses, and contra-
> ceptives everywhere jerking to
> gether like water pumps
> and the hissing and
> sighing and kissing of
> all the exhausted
> egos beckoning in these
> shadows.

The Bearing Beast inside Patric Dickinson is a less lurid creature and the poet can adjust to his presence more reasonably, in two gentle eight-line stanzas; but he's still there. Dickinson shouldn't, of course, be read within a mile of Barker. Of the same generation, they took opposite directions, the one on towards the Apocalypse, the other back towards the Georgians. After the placid openings of some Dickinson poems ('There are garden-birds we love', 'Coming down the dale from the east'), it's surprising but they *do* deliver. He has a way of working a forceful sense quietly and intricately into the structure:

> As one gets older . . .
> Swallows don't gather
> They snap like dreams –
> One awakes to a bleak
>
> Rheumatic cold where snow
> Falls like tombstones and bones
> Migrate . . .

It isn't Dickinson's best book. He's not very good at the anecdotal ('A Memory of Dylan Thomas') or the jocular, and he wastes some promising opportunities. But 'subtle self-effacement' is too modest a banner for the poet of 'Stillness', with its 'life-savers', half humans yet half Eumenides, who 'come/In the dark with lamps and salves,/Words, Music and . . ./The exact and inexorable/Tenderness of their powers/To save all but themselves'.

Hugh Maxton's first book is as much as anything about keeping the human violences of the urban Ireland and the natural violences of the rural in balance:

> ours is still a rural country.
> In which we never need
> the stoat for savagery
> or the yellow-scarf
> for extinction.

The sense of those lines is not impossible to work out, but a bit difficult, surely; and the balance between past and present in a rich (but clear) poem like 'Cousin', or between town and country in 'Causeway' ('our engines running docile as heifers'), is difficult to maintain. Maxton looks better when he settles for one thing *or* the other; 'Sligo' avoids the habit of strong, yet curiously impacted, imagery:

> the scorched hill absorbs
> whatever little springs
> from the remote stones;
>
> the coarse grass
> and saltsmitten weeds
> hide the luminous land.

And he looks best of all when he writes with clarity and patent personal conviction, in 'Risk', or 'The Dream Up', or in 'Waking', a deeply tender and moving poem in memory of his father:

> That stub in his hand is a rent book
> high as a bible, thin as his widow.
> Below it, in the shadow, I imagine
> the soft metal of his heart
> (a gold cog, slipping) finally burred,
> refusing to bite.

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Julian Barnes

Any Old Irony

Conquered City by VICTOR SERGE translated by Richard Greeman *Gollancz* £3.95
Scenes from Bourgeois Life by MERVYN JONES *Quartet* £3.95
The Malacia Tapestry by BRIAN ALDISS *Cape* £3.95

Conquered City is the last of three novels Victor Serge wrote in Moscow in 1930-32 despite police surveillance and the official blacklisting which finally led to his expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1936. Like Solzhenitsyn, he is primarily a writer of fiction as testimony, urgently setting down an authentic account of what he knows happened before the historians start lying. This mistrust of the promises and practices of historical writing pervades the book: for Serge, it is not the past, mulled over by academics, which explains the present; but rather the present, written about on the wing, which explains the past.

Conquered City covers the writer's experiences in Petrograd in 1919-20, when famine, apathy, economic collapse and the besieging Whites were threatening to snuff out the Revolution. Constructed in detached fragments to be worked up separately and then sent abroad, the novel is highly episodic (a disadvantage overcome by making the city as a whole the protagonist), and in parts unpolished ('Others, less involved in struggle,' wrote Serge, 'would perfect a style; but what I had to tell, *they* could not tell.') There's nothing unfinished, though, about the admirably clear-eyed perspective of revolution which Serge offers. Equally alert to the loutishness of the conquerors as to the decadence of the conquered, he centres the novel on the activities of the Cheka, going straight for the largest and most melancholy irony of communism: how those initially dedicated to liberating the people come quickly to inflict arbitrary death on their compatriots.

His strength as a documentary writer lies in his refusal to believe that events are as straightforward as we would imagine or like them to be: not just in showing the way great chunks of history unexpectedly overlap (Lenin orates in Moscow while close by a witch is burnt), but also in bringing out the ambiguities and moral dilemmas which are constantly thrown up. Is it odd, or wrong, that a phoney Red hanged by the Whites is just as good a martyr as a valued one? What should one think of art racketeers who coincidentally succeed in protecting treasures from the iconoclastic hands of revolutionary peasants? *Conquered City* is lucid, pained, and questioning; it is also moving. The revolutionaries throughout it are convinced of two things: their own impending extinction, and the ultimate increase in mankind's happiness that their deaths will bring. The final irony, more outside the book than in, is that the one does not necessarily ensure the other.

Choice, rather than circumstance, makes Mervyn Jones's style the unflashy thing that it is. Flat, monochrome and Maughamish, it avoids imagery, and the constant priority of sense over sound makes for the occasional aural collapse (try saying 'the cessation of the foursome left the twosomes to function as usual' without frothing). It is, however, appropriate prose for describing the flat, monochrome etc. lives of the likeable but corrupt professional middle-classes of Epping, Dorking and Wimbledon. Bourgeois life no longer operates a system of rigid laws designed to suffocate Emma Bovarys; instead, its keynote is a sort of voluntary sleepiness. Disturbance expresses itself not in social but sexual terms: some find adultery the only way of invoking authentic and powerful feelings; others merely slide into sexual inertness; while in one of these stories, an isolated quartet of siblings enforces its solidarity by incest. Summary makes Mr Jones sound lurid; in fact, his forte is conveying the jogging half-awareness of the bourgeois mind (where equal brainspace is given to the misfortune of friends and the non-arrival of the plumber), and the passionlessness of much of the life: spouses walk out not in anger but in empty, incommunicable finality. Best of all he captures the timbre of thought, and the inherent selfishness, of his subjects: 'At the end of the day,' remarks husband comfortingly to wife about a failing marriage, 'they're other people, and we're us.'

Style is also a central question in *The Malacia Tapestry*, an inflated capriccio illustrated, and in part inspired, by Tiepolo etchings. It's set in a sort of 18th-century Italy (though in fact it's much later – ten millenia after the Hellenic age). The choice for the language, therefore, is plain or fancy; and Brian Aldiss confidently opts for fancy, opening with casual chat like 'I'm too hard up even to get my amulet blessed', and people saying 'Today not' when they mean 'Not today', with many a 'Mercy, pray', and 'Deuce take it'. This mode is pretty hard to keep up, and soon more familiar Aldissisms surface, like 'Keep your filthy thoughts off my sister', and 'She peeled out of her dress', mixed uneasily with pure Victorianisms like 'swive', and later phrases like 'coffee lounge' and 'class enemy', all of which blister the bumblingly archaic surface of the prose. If you can swallow the language, then Mr Aldiss's amiable inventiveness will probably slip down without too much trouble: flying people, satyrs and imaginary animals make for undemanding fun. Brainswise, there's some play with the idea of the authoritarian state resisting change. But mostly the plot is a life-copies-art sexodrama told by an out-of-work, swiving actor whose philandering is repaid in kind. He also kills a whopping monster ('seven metric tons of ravening animal'), rescues his girlfriend and drops in on a murky bunch of wizards hunched over a smoking altar who tell him about the duality of the spirit and the dangers of knowledge. It may be, as the publishers brazenly suggest, that this novel 'sets out in dramatic form many of the conflicts and contradictions of our own day'; but it seems to me more like Dennis Wheatley poshing up a melodrama by putting in a few hours in the BM print room.

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Valentine Cunningham

Prudence Farmer Poetry Prize

What's most instantly striking to the outsider called in – by benefactor's stipulation – to assist the Literary Editor in awarding the annual Prudence Farmer Prize for the best poem published in the NS each year is simply the surprising bulk of a twelvemonth's yield. Aside from the ever-inventive wodges of Roger Woddis, the NS published 81 poems between June 1975 and June 1976. It's often complained that poetry nowadays lacks outlets; but here at least – and it's not specially noticeable as you digest your 1.55 (I make it) poems per week – literary patronage on a not ungrand scale. Nor – and this must be admitted by even the hardest-nosed peruser of the year's gathered verses – is this stuff, to put it no more forcibly, by any means junk. Last year's lot includes one poem from each of Douglas Dunn, Robert Graves, Laurence Lerner, I. A. Richards, David Harsent, David Holbrook, John Fuller, Gavin Ewart, Dannie Abse, Derek Mahon, Seamus Heaney, Peter Redgrove and Clive James; two from Vernon Scannell and Geoffrey Grigson; three each from Peter Porter, Ted Hughes, Patricia Beer and Craig Raine; five from D. J. Enright; and six from Roy Fuller. Never mind the grouching, feel the width and the quality!

Accumulation of numbers, though, characterises the individual poem far less than it does the year's harvest. Only Clive James made a whole page, and that with his imitation Popish couplets, addressed to Peter Porter. Invention clearly presses less sternly on most, and even the four-line squib is no stranger to NS pages. Indeed the sense of our poets providing footnotes to a creativity going on, or having gone on, more largely elsewhere is pretty prevalent. And not only in the year's translations (from Philippe Jaccottet, Tadeusz Rósewicz and Tarjei Vesaas), nor simply in the imitations (Derek Mahon's 'After Nerval', D. J. Enright's 'He Was Asking About the Quality', after Cavafy). Still more commonly settled-for is the role of being inspired (but only a bit) by the ancient seers (like Enright's 'A Thought from Hardy'), or organising the odd wry notion as it pops into your head of an evening as you listen to your records (as, perhaps, in Roy Fuller's 'The Score of Satie's Jack in the Box').

The batch is fairly characteristic of the deliberately held-back reach of much contemporary English poetry. Only Ted Hughes, the very last of the romantics, tried to make myths out of the ancient stuff of myths – ice-crusts, snowflakes, a mountain lion. Only James Fenton appeared to have taken his notebook to an exotic clime (to Vietnam). For the rest the most clamant claims were evidently private ones, and their poems contentedly existed quite in the family way, as it were. Dotable-on and fussable-over offspring, or offspring's offspring, inspired some of the very best verses: Vernon Scannell's on 'Our Pale Daughters', Roy Fuller's on his two blonde, flute-playing granddaughters who leave their folded-back copy of *Animal Farm* in the bathroom and chuck the towels all over the floor, and Elaine Feinstein's on her 'two thin boys' fishing in 'Cambrian age' rockpools. The deaths most grieved over were ones in the family or immediate circle. And the photograph-album – whose modern impermanence mocks the very notion of *souvenir* and the fragile parody of ancient marble and gilded monuments that it feebly attempts to be – is made a recurrent focus of attention. There were four photograph-poems over the year, the most bleakly telling by Tom Paulin. Delights too were mainly familiar ones, to be discovered on family hols at Aberystwyth with the Holbrooks, at Penllechog with the Fullers (junior), or by some stream, doubtless near Berinsfield, on Vernon Scannell's villeggiatura as Southern Arts Council Fellow. Foreign travel does appear to be gone in for extraordinarily seldom: with most of our poets it is, clearly, a matter of Just Over the Suburbs and Not A Great Way Off!

In, then, a world of such *Tiny Tears* (as a recent Roy Fuller title put it) the sharper poems signal themselves precisely by reflecting ironically on the narrow bounds English poetry is currently set and setting itself: like Seamus Heaney finding himself escaping as 'a wood-kerne' in Wicklow, but startling you by noting that it's from 'the massacre'; or Craig Raine, inhabitant of 'the great indoors', wondering just how much inventive scrutiny the 'two inches of ivory' can stand. Amidst all the homely pieties, the ribald guarantee themselves a gratifying distinction ('My Lewds, Labia and Genitalmen', Raine's Best Man eschews announcing), and debunking of all sorts – Gavin Ewart's ('Wordsworth really loved daffodils. He said they were flashers'), or Peter Porter's ('On a rock orchid' of Piero di Cosimo's his eyes catches 'the roundness and gloze / Of a Lapith's bum') or Clive James's ('And Mrs Whitlam in a negligée. / Temptation!') – comes like a welcome enlargement. Above all in these circumstances self-deprecation, laughing at one's own expense, makes the aptest of tones.

So although singling out one poem from the year's haul is very difficult, not to say somewhat invidious, it seems most appropriate to choose Roy Fuller's 'Crisis' for Prudence Farmer's award. It inhabits the currently dominant vale of tiny tears but it very amusingly makes the most of the moral size (waist size being of course another, if related, matter) which it knows its speaker has been cut down to. The poet presents himself as the anti-hero most common to our time and place. He's not at all a man of action: his adventures are reduced to 'Visiting Plymouth for the BBC' and pottering in the garden. With him and his ilk there's to be no more sailing from Plymouth for the azure Spanish main, instead only a negotiating of the trickier waves of azure jeans in Debenham & Freebody's.

He's scarcely cut out for a great lover either: instead of erotic exploits to write boastingly home about there remains only a sub-erotic encounter at the Debenham & Freebody counter. The poem touches nicely on men's regular embarrassment at having strange shop-assistants fumbling at their crotches with tape-measures, pastiche-lovers only, and it fills out rebukingly with energetic erotic surrogates that scoff at the absence of any more heroic lechery. There's a *hardening* all right, but only of prices; there are *stands*, but only ones laden with trousers for sale; there is a *poker*, but it's only a poker-faced shop-lady. The rhymes join in the conspiracy against the poet, their flattening trajectories of threesomes underlining a fine bathos. The poem even manages a half suppressed jeer at the uncelebrated doings it's celebrating (the 'Ho Ho' to be heard in that crossing 'the Hoe to my hotel'). In short, 'Crisis' makes the most of its speaker's knowing his turbulences are mainly in tea-cups, his *crise* that characteristically downbeat modern affair begun by Prufrock – whose 'crisis' was mostly a matter of (and so was made to rhyme with) 'tea and cakes and ices'.

Roy Fuller

Crisis

O courteous ladies of the West Countree!
Visiting Plymouth for the BBC,
I saw in Debenham & Freebody

'Trousers reduced'. And marched into
the store –
Trousers sardined in stands upon the floor,
Trousers that won the West, that
Oxford wore.

Wanting a pair to work in in the garden,
Before inflating prices further harden,
I laughingly begged the shop
assistant's pardon

And asked her if among the azure jeans –
Although a style intended for the teens
Or certainly especially for the lean –

Something might fit one rather
broadly-based,
An ageing man, a man without much waist.
'I'm sure there is,' she said, quite
poker-faced.

And added: 'Do you know
his measurements?'
Dear lady, how experienced with gents!
I meant myself. You twigged! And so
I went

Smugly across the Hoe to my hotel,
Pants in a carrier. Against the hell
Of sunset the statue of the admiral

Looked out to Cadiz or the Spanish Main.
On seas courageous and in shops urbane,
Surely our England must be great again.

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Television

Ian Hamilton

The Best of British . . .

On our screens there is a lone runner. He is wearing a somewhat garish singlet and is sallow of complexion. His body movements are unnaturally fluent and it is no surprise when suddenly he raises his arms in a distastefully narcissistic gesture of triumph. We can distantly see crowds waving back at him. After a few seconds, another runner, then a third, trot into view – not quite so cocky as the first, but still fairly well pleased with themselves. They too go in for a bit of victorious arm-waving. Some chaps in yellow blazers move forward to pat them on the back. The race is run. The victors and the vanquished have been sorted out.

Or so a lot of people would like us to believe. What I've just described, though, is merely one way of looking at BBC-1's coverage of *The Olympics* – and 'looking' is the operative word. Now (if you really want to know what's really going on) try turning up the sound. 'And – here – he – comes – now!' The commentating voice is at squeak level and it is not easy to make out exactly what is being said; what's clear, however, is that in spite of the fact that, *pictorially*, those blazered chaps seem to be escorting their pampered favourites towards the dressing rooms, this intriguing race is by no means over yet. And nor it is. Just a split second before we're shunted off to watch some hairy ape chucking a boulder at the clouds, the miraculous occurs: we see him lurching into view – our boy! Wholesomely disconsolate and utterly shagged out, he's done what many a sneerer said was technically impossible: he's actually squeezed himself *on-screen* between the victory announcements and the Canadians' notoriously quick cut to the field events. 'And that's the kind of thing,' our now detumescing guide exults, 'that makes the whole grinding four-year slog worthwhile.' It's not the losing that matters, it's the having taken part.

In other words, as usual, there have been two Olympic Games – the one *they* watch, which involves foreign persons winning things, and the one *we* have described to us, much of which necessarily takes place outside the Canadian producers' field of vision. Here is the only sporting event in which we would be absolutely lost without our commentators' help, and the team we've sent out there to protect our interests knows exactly what we want to hear. For instance, if Alan Pascoe (whom the team has been inflammatorily touting as a world beater for the entire week preceding his great test) turns out to make a hash of the hurdles final, our men know that this is the best moment to tell us more about that training injury that has been dogging him for months. (Pascoe, by the way, was pitted against runners called Jesus and Moses, so nothing short of a miracle would have fixed things up for him.) The team also knows that if there are four false starts in the women's 100 metre final, then it is bound to be our girl who bears the brunt; more sensitive perhaps, more bothered about fair play – whatever it was, Andrea Lynch took care not to win this controversial sprint. As David Coleman said of her: 'To finish sixth in the world is no disgrace.' And it was this unobtrusive adjustment of criteria – from 'world-beater' to 'no disgrace' – that persistently brought the best out of our team. Little wonder – after the non-disgrace of homespun types like Ovett, Capes and Foster – that we are beginning to hear talk of David Wilkie being a product of Miami University.

No doubt some vaguely satirical reference to the Olympic spirit was intended by *Second House*'s screening last week of a study of Dag Hammarskjöld, that most revered of toilers for the brotherhood of man. The programme focused almost exclusively on the Congo episode of Hammarskjöld's career; fair enough, since this was unarguably the most taxing and crucial of the challenges he had to cope with, and finally it was the one that brought about his death. But I'd have liked to have been told more about his background, about the origins and evolution of the private/public split in him which the programme made so much of. We were given a few either trite or tantalising quotes from *Markings* and extracts from Conor Cruise O'Brien's play, *Murderous Angels*, a play whose view of Hammarskjöld seemed to be taken rather too easily on trust; but all this was just enough to get us wondering about the exact balance in his nature of saintliness and cunning. It was hinted throughout that there was rather more of the latter than Hammarskjöld's pious broodings might lead one to suspect, but we were given nothing new or conclusive in the way of evidence. His dealings with Katanga, his involvement (if any) in Lumumba's murder: these remained hazy to the end. Still, it was an absorbing essay, skilfully put together and worth watching for the newsreel material alone.

The week before *The Last Mission*, *Second House* had wheeled out the usual Spanish Civil War veterans (Spender, Cockburn, etc.) to reminisce for the umpteenth time about their marginal roles in that now 40-year-old conflict. Interesting enough material in bits, but our obsession with the International Brigade aspect of the war is such that few casual British students of the period know very much about what the brigade was helping to defend. The merit of John Elliot's play *The Madness* (BBC-2) was precisely that it attempted to explain. Set in the period of Largo Caballero's coalition government, it dramatised the socialist prime minister's doomed efforts to hold together some kind of working amity between the Communists and the Anarchists – neither of whom the ever-weakening defence of anti-Fascist Spain could do without. Caballero (portrayed here as much younger than the script kept saying he was) didn't stand a chance, but many a racked compromise had to be thrashed out before he would admit it. Thus, tormented cabinet meetings – with the Commies presented as the real intransigents – formed the meat of the drama, and it could not have been an easy task to keep these both dramatically alive and yet correctly complicated. On the whole, I thought the effort a success, and greatly preferred the straight wrangling to the soul-of-Spain symbolising that afflicted the play elsewhere.

Between races these last two weeks, I've been trying to get the hang of Alun Owen's series of plays, *Forget Me Not* (Yorkshire), mainly because they're supposed to be about the kind of Fleet Street hacks I spend some of my time with. The first episode depicted a burgeoning romance between a tightlipped libel lawyer and a vacant-looking cub reporter whose exposé of some municipal abuse he'd unsportingly had spiked; nothing much had burgeoned by the end of part one, principally because the pair of them kept breaking off to do dizzyingly fake things about the office (the brittle woman's-page chatter, the lovably valueless acerbities of the seen-it-all news editor). Part two I only managed to see the second half of, and there was no sign of the lawyer; instead the wide-eyed cub seemed to be making out with an East End gang boss. Disconcerting. I wish I could be sure that I'm going to let part three sort it out for me.

Films

John Coleman

Goodbye, Sailor

The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea *Carlton*
The Message *Plaza 1; Casino, ABC1, Fulham Road; ABC1, Bayswater*

The title of Lewis John Carlino's fluffed *Sailor* sounds all too like a translation, and is: the original was a short 1963 novel by Yukio Mishima, the homosexual Japanese writer who went out in a blaze of bathos in November, 1970, after a hapless shot at a military coup and a successful go at harakiri. Without more knowledge of the Mishima than that it was set in Yokohama, a substantial port with a population of over a million, and dealt in the evil activities of a gang of adolescents secure in the knowledge they could not be legally punished – 'Acts of juveniles less than 14 years of age are not punishable by law' – I must perforce spare you a blow-by-blow comparison between book and film. Not that it would be helpful: the simple, damning point is that there is a world of difference between the stiff, codified oriental ethics acceptable (one presumes) in a Mishima context and the

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sort of wickedness a gang of red-blazered 13-year-olds in a small Devon seaport might get up to. The felonious transposition is compounded by Mr Carlino's script, which has the lads in particular asked to emit some unspeakable lines. Their 'Chief' (Earl Rhodes), puffing uncertainly at a cigar, talks of 'the pure and perfect order of the world' and, later, drugs and dissects a cat to display its heart: 'this is the core . . . the centre of life that makes the pose possible.'

Back at the story, young Jonathan Osborne (personably played by Jonathan Kahn) is given to peeking through a hole in the bedroom wall at his widowed mother, Anne (Sarah Miles), who runs an antique shop by day and something of a sexual high temperature at night. From discreet masturbation, she stoops to conquer a bearded American seadog from a tramp steamer in the harbour: this is Jim Cameron, better known as the turgid Kris Kristofferson. Douglas Slocombe is one of our finest cinematographers – and I hear *Playboy* had a field day with Miss M. and Mr K. – but it is sad to see him reduced to such awfully 'tasteful' circling, caressing images of Anne and Jim at it. I can tell you *my* boyish curiosity was soon satisfied (a bit more like it is a scatty, though again ill-judged, interlude in a tea-shop where Jim fumbles her under the table amid toffee-nosed, blue-rinsed sippers and munchers). The sailor, who once spotted a grey shark – very mystic, this, and his 'dream of glory', says soppy Anne – goes back to sea, time and lots of letters pass, he returns to reclaim Jonno's mum as his bride. The gang regard this, for a reason that by-passed me, as a giant let-down and old Jim's number is up. The most hilarious sequence has the kids packing knives, a meat cleaver, surgical instruments for a last picnic with their prey on a deserted headland. This is where, unscrewing a thermos, one of them delivers the unforgettable 'Tea, Mr Cameron?' The long withdrawing shot at the close has been so heavily signalled nothing is left for horror. In a characteristically happy formulation, Miss Miles has earlier referred, with one of her wan smiles, to the 'vicissitudes of puberty'. All right, but what's young Jonno going to do when he grows up?

The 182-minute *The Message* has had its first title, *Mohammad – Messenger of God*, adjusted 'out of respect for the Moslem community in Great Britain'. This is in line with the whole excursion, which may best be described as prophetless. Moslem protocol has it that the historical personage in question cannot be shown and when one reflects upon some of the John the Baptists and creeping Jesuses the screen has thrust at us in the past, Islam goes one up over Christianity by this reticence. It does, however, make for a monumentally boring film, with the added hazard of actors sometimes staring out at the spectator for all the world as if *he* were the unseen Mohammad. The invisible hero, insofar as he can be said to emerge, is evidently a tremendously nice and sound chap, reluctant to fight but pretty crafty in warfare when necessary, all for equal rights for women ('different but equal', as one of his several spokesmen puts it to the King of Abyssinia) and the brotherhood of man. Directed by Moustapha Akkad from a flat, flavourless screenplay by H. A. L. Craig – one hopes he got an oil well – and woodenly articulated by an English-speaking cast that includes Andre Morell, Peter Madden, Martin Benson, Rosalie Crutchley, Johnny Sekka and Anthony Quinn, it rehearses the polite version of how Mohammad disseminated the creed of Islam. There are two or three set-piece battles of no great excitement and there is a judicious modicum of torture. Irene Papas as Hind, wife of the Meccan leader who is violently opposed to the prophet's teachings (after all, 'the gods are both our worship and our revenue', it is argued), carries on as if she is playing Medea and is the liveliest item around. I think she bends down to suck dead Quinn's blood near the end, but the camera cuts discreetly away. Mr Akkad, who produced and directed, has also made an Arabic version. This simple child's guide to Islam – which thinly covers the years 610-632 AD – concludes with views of various mosques and praying crowds in the 20th century. It is extremely hard to imagine why it was made, since it would have even a simple child fairly scratching with tedium after the first couple of reels. I wish those sheikhs would just stick to buying up Scotland.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

A Natural

A Chorus Line *Drury Lane*
The Circle *Chichester*
Banana Ridge *Savoy*
Love's Labour's Lost *Open Air*

There are just a few plays which seem to have been discovered rather than invented. The ideas behind them are so sweetly simple, so obvious in retrospect, that you feel they've been waiting for someone to dig them up and put them on show. I had never had this reaction to a musical before last week; but then in came *A Chorus Line*, which one Michael Bennett claims to have 'conceived, choreographed and directed', a sly attempt to steal the credit from Mother Nature. She it surely was who saw that an audition for a Broadway show would itself provide the perfect form, the perfect material, for a Broadway show. Dance and song emerge effortlessly from the situation: plot, too. It is always fascinating to watch people at work, parading their specialised skills, and so it proves here, as the chorus puts together its 'combinations' – 'turn, turn, turn, point, step, point, walk, walk, walk'. But it's more absorbing still when those very routines are packed with tension. Some 20 dancers are giving their all, and only eight can be chosen. Who will they be?

The first song establishes the proper atmosphere: 'God, I need this job, I've got to get this job.' Desperation motivates these people, and desperation makes them submit to what often seems to combine the glummer aspects of drill under a rigorous RSM, an interview in the headmaster's study, an inquisition on the psychiatrist's couch and a grilling by secret police, complete with white lights burning up the eyeballs. The producer is rarely seen. Mostly, he exercises power from some Olympus behind the circle: an aloof, grey-flannel voice that lines up the candidates, then forces one after another to step forward, recount a life story and answer his questions. 'I don't buy that,' he coolly informs Mike, who claims not to have cared when his schoolchums christened him 'twinkletoes'. 'How did your sister die?' he amiably asks Paul. 'Just bring it down,' he suggests to Sheila, whose habitual slouch has become a bit belligerent. 'Bring what down?' 'Your attitude.' Well-informed people tell me that auditions aren't normally so impudent and prying, even in the nation that pioneered the Esalin Institute. But there's poetic justice in the exaggeration: this is what it must feel like out there on the stage, when you're exposing your talent and career to some impersonal deity from Park Avenue.

But there's a more obvious justification for it all. It destroys the anonymity of the chorus: it allows the audience to involve itself in the dancers' individual aspirations, their particular problems, such as pushy parents, homosexuality, small breasts, lack of height, doughy looks. At first the potted histories are humorously told – a girl who flunked out of an avant-garde drama school because she couldn't go on impersonating ice-creams, a boy who decided to prolong an aimless adolescence 'because to commit suicide in Buffalo is redundant'. But then the bruises begin to show. Cassie, once a promising solo dancer, pleads ignominiously for a chance to rejoin the line, and Paul describes how his parents first saw him dolled-up, ready to do a transvestite act in a tatty show uptown. It was somewhere here that a doubt or two began to nag at my mind, a touch of cramp to pinch my withers. Hadn't Mr Bennett and his collaborators taken on too much? Wasn't it arrogant to think that a two-hour musical could achieve emotional depth and psychological complexity, especially when so many case-studies had to be flipped quickly through? Perhaps; but it's an arrogance to respect, one too rarely found in a genre which seems to take perverse pride in processing the second-hand into the two-dimensional.

All the same, I wonder if the decision to play without an interval was wise. At present the musical succeeds rather too well in making us share the dancers' debilitating day; and by the time they had started a sort of Equity talk-in, about the lack of work on Broadway and the grim prospects for ageing troupers, I could sense the eyes glazing and thirsty throats palpitating around me. But there's no disputing the electric excellence of those bodies, spinning and fizzing in front of the looming mirrors that constitute the sum of the set, and then marching menacingly forward en masse, a tiny army of sweatshirts and stockings. They sing Marvin Hamlisch's nervy, unsettled music pretty well, and most of the time are equal to the demands of the words, which are sharp, smart and by James Kirk-

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wood, Nicholas Dante and Edward Kleban. If I must fix names to tongues and legs, they would, I suppose, be Tommy Aguilar, Ron Kurowski and Jean Fraser; but several others seem scarcely less stunning. What they all do, and do exhilaratingly, is communicate a joy in dance that can't be crushed by unemployment, empty iceboxes or the intermittent ordeal of auditions like this. *A Chorus Line*, isn't quite the ideal envisaged by Nature – something has got dented in the exhumation – but it is closer than anyone could have hoped.

The Circle is, at last, a break in the Michell regime's sustained attempt to put Chichester firmly off the theatrical map. It's the play in which Somerset Maugham surprised the world by feinting moral orthodoxy, and then allowing his heroine to run adulterously off. It dates, obviously; but Peter Dews's production is well-honed, Susan Hampshire avoids that archness which often afflicts her, and Bill Fraser and Googie Withers give a touchingly true account of the old, sottish couple who fled the domestic coop 30 years before.

I wish I could share the general enthusiasm for Val May's revival of *Banana Ridge*, which has long struck me as the funniest production of Ben Travers Inc., last year's sensation on the stockmarket of taste. Robert Morley, for once, doesn't use the play as his personal whoopee cushion, and George Cole is more than competent. But one might have expected their predicament as putative fathers of the young bounder who is proving irresistible to their wives to generate more laughter. What's wanted is more finesse, better timing, more careful preparation of climaxes, a judgment that might also apply to the latest *Love's Labour's Lost*, which is unluckily obliged to compete, not only with the hubbub of Regent's Park, but also with the superbly sensitive production of the play the RSC put on a few months ago.

Radio

Peter Porter

Hold the Fort

What used to be called a radio feature – all the way from Louis MacNeice and Dylan Thomas to the fully frontal radiosonics of Michael Mason – is probably the most imaginative use of sound broadcasting the BBC has produced. Yet it is more than 15 years since the Features Department was disbanded and the task of finding new ways of combining words with sound was passed to the Drama and the Talks Departments. Both have so much to do in the general run of programme-making that they necessarily cannot sponsor more than the occasional experimental piece. Nowadays when such a feature succeeds it usually does so because a good writer has been given his head and a good producer has come up with ways of realising the result. This is not such a truism as it sounds: too often, original radio is taken to mean strange methods with nothing to say – slick electronics in search of an author. I started listening to plays recently with the intention of complaining about the lack of enterprise shown by the BBC in its programme building. But if much that goes out is orthodox, there is always a leavening of new and interesting work, usually commissioned from someone who has found radio a liberating and not a confining medium.

Over the last three weeks, for instance, Beckett's *Rough for Radio* and Angela Carter's *Vampirella* (both Radio 3) proved the point. Admittedly, the Beckett was a repeat, but Miss Carter's fantasia on Count Dracula's daughter was a fine and gamey adventure in words and noises. A young man, called simply 'the hero', is cycling through the Carpathians, and is abducted to the castle where the Countess Vampirella is attended by a Scottish governess and a sinister kitten. The action, whereby the young man saves himself through the power of love and confers peaceful extinction on Vampirella, is less important than the scenes of exotica and erotica which are slotted into the sound-space, like brilliant short cassettes. These include flashbacks to the husband of the genteel Edinburgh governess, who had been a Perthshire cannibal, to a French necrophile of decidedly sententious cast of mind, and to the great Count Dracula himself. It is 1914, and the shot has just been fired at Sarajevo: more blood than Dracula could imagine is about to be loosed on the world. Miss Carter's language was playfully elegant. Just as the listener is thinking that it is all too excessive even for such a theme as hers, a mental shadow crosses the writing from the disquiet of the everyday world. Writers like Miss Carter are using our new freedom of expression, and freedom from categories, in an exciting way. The French necrophile's comparison of his wholehearted love of corpses with the average man's marriage to a frigid wife would probably have been censored 15 years ago. Here it took its place with the other aphorisms in an almost genial way. Anna Massey gave a splendid performance as the most gentle of heavy-breathing predators and the production by Glyn Dearman was of a very high order.

At this time, when a twice-yearly journal of Beckett Studies is about to be launched, the writings of the master need no praise from me, but I ought to record that *Rough for Radio* was the first piece of Beckett I've enjoyed since *All that Fall* (also written specially for radio). The music-hall exchanges which seem to lie behind so many of Beckett's purgatorial examinations came up strongly in Harold Pinter's and Billie Whitelaw's performances as an experimental scientist and his stenographer assistant. Some of the jokes in their repetitive hell were unexpected. After quoting an overripe passage from Sterne, the Animator (as the experimenter is called) remarks, 'ah, these old speeches from the days of book reviewing'. The best straightforward play I heard was Stewart Conn's *Thistlewood* (Radio 4, The Monday Play). It told the story of the Lincolnshire radical, Arthur Thistlewood, who survived Peterloo only to be betrayed in the Cato Street conspiracy and executed. Conn employed the oldest of devices – John Bull as Narrator, imitation ballads, and vignettes of the upper orders being characteristically beastly – but the story was told so sensibly and succinctly that, by the time Thistlewood met his fate, real tension had built up. Generally, Conn avoided the curse of this sort of play – indignation at a comfortable distance from the events. He found these early-19th-century radicals fascinating and brought them to life in his writing.

No programme has been more charged with feeling than John Betjeman's Sunday night presentation, *Sweet Songs of Zion* (Radio 4). Anyone with a residual love of hymns (which may mean anyone who went to a church school) will find his heart tugged at by Betjeman's eager unfolding of the riches of the Protestant hymnals. In fact, it is only certain often-bypassed corners of the hymn books that Betjeman is concerned with. For instance, the third in the series dealt with the Yattendon Hymnal, familiar from the Poet Laureate's lines in 'The Old Liberals': 'Yattendon hymns/Played on the *hautbois* by a lady dress'd in blue/Her white-hair'd father accompanying her thereto/On tenor or bass recorder' – though here sung by the choir of St Margaret's, Westminster. The Yattendon Hymnal was Robert Bridges's attempt to give prosodic dignity to Anglican hymns. His verses, quoted by Betjeman, were rather coldly authoritative, but his refurbishings were done for some marvellous tunes, including 'O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden' and a beautiful melody by Orlando Gibbons. The American hymns which Betjeman selected included a rousingly square rendition of Longfellow's 'Life is real, life is earnest' and a fine set of poems by Whittier versifying Quaker sentiments. We should have been told who had set them to music. One Moody and Sankey number put God down in the middle of the Wild West – 'Hold the fort, for I am coming,' it began.

Ballet

Oleg Kerensky

Unparalleled

Martha Graham Dance Company *Covent Garden*
Ballet Rambert *Sadler's Wells*

Covent Garden is full, which must be a pleasant surprise for the management, and full of people who are being pleasantly surprised in their turn. Of course there is a devoted following, generally found at Sadler's Wells or The Place, for what is usually but misleadingly called 'modern' dance. But many of those enjoying the Graham season normally find this kind of thing pretentious and boring. It often is. Graham, however, has always been first and foremost a woman of the theatre, determined to make an impact on her audience. As she said in her opening-night speech, she

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prefers hostility to apathy, and enthusiasm to either. Neither hostility nor apathy have been in evidence.

Graham's dances are technically skilled, meticulously rehearsed, and highly professional. It is a joy to watch them in *Diversion of Angels*, falling to the ground, jumping and rising high in lifts, running in characteristic loping steps or standing in held balances at angles of 45° or more to the ground. It is also a joy to watch them in stillness, posed in art-gallery tableaux. To be frank, the joy is enhanced by the fact that many of them are very good-looking and that the dancing is often blatantly sexy. The works are decorated with evocative phallic sculptures and shapes by Isamu Noguchi and are lit by the late, great Jean Rosenthal. The music ranges from Aaron Copland and Samuel Barber to minor figures who provide serviceable and appropriate backgrounds for the dancers to 'lean against', as Graham puts it.

The choreography now looks classical because it has become a part of our accepted dance vocabulary. *Appalachian Spring*, with its evocation of young love and puritanical repression in New England, is the precursor of the folk-ballets in many a Broadway musical, while *El Penitente*, with its strolling players cheerfully enacting biblical stories, could have inspired *Godspell*. Graham's dance steps recur constantly in works by Paul Taylor and Hans van Manen, by Jerome Robbins, and indeed by most good present-day choreographers.

In addition, she is an intellectual. Her dramatic works dabble in Freudian psychology and re-interpret the eternal folk-myths, from the Old Testament through Greek tragedy and Joan of Arc to the pioneering days of the United States. Significantly, perhaps, she has always eschewed present-day themes. Her ideas, sometimes fascinating, can seem naïve and her ingenious plots can be obscure. The full-length *Clytemnestra*, for example, contains so many characters that it is hard to identify them. Yet *Clytemnestra* could be enjoyed as an abstract work, even with no knowledge of the story, though it would inevitably suggest some strange new world of ritual and conflict.

To imagine *Clytemnestra* staged by most of today's would-be Graham disciples is to realise the gulf between her and her successors. Today's 'contemporary' choreographers often think it is enough to repeat the same old 'modern' movements without purpose, as Glen Tetley does in *Moveable Garden*, or to have expressive ideas without showing anything much in the way of dance, as Norman Morrice does in *The Sea Whisper'd Me*, both seen in Rambert's 50th-anniversary season. The best new things in this season – Ashton's evocation of Isadora Duncan for Lynn Seymour and Christopher Bruce's evocation of a young Marie Rambert doing cartwheels – had nothing to do with the prevailing trends in modern dance. These usually involve trying to express ideas which are much more naïve and muddled than any of Miss Graham's, and imagining that self-expression, for the choreographer or for the dancers, is an end in itself, regardless of the audience. Music is frequently ignored or is non-existent, while the dancers themselves sometimes have little technical ability or are so fat or so ugly that we don't care whether they have any or not. These are some of the reasons why, as John Percival bluntly put it in *The Times*, bad modern dance is so much more boring than bad classical ballet. For further illumination about this, I recommend James Monahan's new book, *The Nature of Ballet* (Pitman £3.25). which avoids boring historical descriptions and bravely gives acute personal reflections on what dance is all about.

A dancer cannot be great without technique, but can still be great when technique is fading. Graham in her final years on the stage made more impact than most of her talented young successors can do. Fonteyn is doing it now, transforming what seemed a thin, colourless role into the charming, emotional and astonishingly humorous centrepiece of the Australian *Merry Widow*. If you can get to the Palladium one evening this week, you will see a performance to treasure for life.

Art

John Spurling

The Deep-End

Samuel Courtauld Centenary Exhibition *Courtauld Institute Galleries*
Faces as Art *National Portrait Gallery at 15 Carlton House Terrace*
Portraits by Titian *National Gallery*

Samuel Courtauld's eyes were opened to Cézanne at an exhibition of the French School held in 1922. A portrait-painter friend, probably Glyn Philpott, led him to Cézanne's *Provençal Landscape* and exclaimed: 'It makes you go this way and that way, and then off the deep-end altogether.' Already interested in the Impressionists and now quite smitten, Courtauld began to collect, first for himself and then, through a special fund, for the Tate Gallery. Many of the fruits of this altruistic enthusiasm are now in the National Gallery, while most of his own collection was given to the Courtauld Institute which he set up in 1931. After a gap of six years he began collecting again and this second collection passed at his death in 1947 into private hands.

The centenary of his birth is being celebrated with an exhibition which brings both his private collections together. There is now a whole wall of green Cézannes to send the visitor off the deep-end; two smoky Monets hang alongside the two brilliantly coloured ones owned by the Courtauld Galleries; notable river scenes by Renoir and Manet join *La Loge* and *Un bar aux Folies Bergères*; and the Saurat contingent is augmented by six small river paintings as well as the extraordinary sand-scape *Le Chenal de Gravelines*.

Philpott, meanwhile, went on to upset his fellow R.A.'s by his conversion to Picasso and the Paris School. His self-portrait, painted in 1908, has been resurrected with other paintings from the National Portrait Gallery's reserves and is now on display at 15 Carlton House Terrace. It shows a frail, perky young man, posed with self-conscious skill, a character perhaps looking forward to Aldwych farce, certainly not a passion for Cézanne or the likelihood of becoming an indirect benefactor of the nation.

Faces as Art is no assortment of hack work from the Portrait Gallery's basement as one might unworthily suspect, but fully lives up to its title. There are splendid paintings by Lawrence, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Romney and Soest and a rare if rather awkward group portrait by the landscapist Richard Wilson. But one's pleasure in the show is inevitably more social than aesthetic. Here is a random collection of people, some famous, many obsure (such as William Fairfax and his wife, who were acquired in mistake for the famous Parliamentary General Fairfax and wife), a few reduced to anonymity. In these large airy rooms one can make acquaintance with Sir James Hope Grant, a music-loving general clutching his 'cello (the original, surely, of Anthony Powell's General Conyers); with Romney's friend Richard Cumberland from the Board of Trade, playwright, novelist and author of several odes to Romney; with foursquare John Burns, the Labour politician; and two-square Ramsay Macdonald (a pre-World War I portrait, whose varnish appropriately glitters here and there like tinsel); with handsome John Dean, only survivor of a shipwreck off the Cape of Good Hope, whose portrait by Verelst was a gift to him together with a pension from the East India Company, his grateful employers.

Isaac Fuller's flamboyant self-portrait is made more touching by its recent cleaning, which has revealed a child, perhaps the painter's son, looking up with a puzzled expression at the bloated, watery-eyed face of his father, who died of drink. William Fairfax's wife Elizabeth (in their marvellous wedding-portrait by Soest) has her left fist clenched in her lap and a look of frozen endurance on her face. But Boldini's portrait of Gertrude Elizabeth Blood, journalist and art-critic, whose husband Lord Colin Campbell accused her of adultery with four co-respondents, shows her full-length in a kind of S-bend springing posture across the end of a couch, dressed in wind-swept black satin with a bunch of roses at the breast. I hope these people will not have to be shut away again; it would be a shame to break up such a good party.

Long before his first sight of the Impressionists, Courtauld visited Italy and fell for the old masters. His reaction – 'I felt strong and exciting currents still flowing beneath the surface of the paint' – suggests the difference between the faces at Carlton House Terrace and those at the National Gallery's exhibition marking the quarter-centenary of Titian's death. The English faces, whether true to the original or not, are resolved statements of appearance and personality; Titian's portraits seem to be still in process, as if the painter's mind and hand were to this very moment encountering the elusive reality of the sitter. This impression is not given by anything so crude as turmoil in the paint surface or even by a sense of confrontation. On the contrary,

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the extreme delicacy of the treatment and the stillness of the pose emphasise the sitter's privacy. It is a matter, as in Shakespeare's plays, of the artist's power to explore and the subject's reserves of mystery being held in exact equilibrium.

The mystery is most intimate in Titian's early portraits, particularly those of his now unidentifiable contemporaries, ambitious, sensitive young men in three-quarter face against dark backgrounds. There are three in this exhibition, including the stirring *Temple Newsam Portrait* once attributed to Giorgione. In later paintings, such as the double portrait of Georges d'Armagnac and his secretary, there is an extra, public dimension. The bishop's small, neat face stares right across the canvas and beyond the spectator's shoulder. His secretary, eyes on his master's face, kneels waiting for dictation. The mystery here is one not so much of personality in itself as of the possible effects of that personality on others. Titian's great group portrait of the Vendramin family, from the Gallery's own collection, in which these effects are studied on a scale at once intimate and monumental, forms the centrepiece of the exhibition.

Every one of these exhibitions, by the way, is free; whatever the imperfections of our society, it still puts art before butter.

Weekend Competition

No 2423 Set by B. J. Tickle

'Val, amant de la Reine, alla, grand
tour magnanime,
Vallament de l'arène à la grande Tour-
Magne à Nîmes

. . . is a pun without parallel anywhere else in Europe,' claims Michael Girsdanky. What the fellow's suggesting is that it would be impossible to compose a rhyming couplet in English whose two lines (when spoken rapidly) sounded the same. Impossible? We wonder . . . Unlimited entries by 13 August.

Result of No 2420 Set by Gerry Hamill

The Coal Board want the Electricity Board to use more coal. The Electricity Board say: no way. Both want the Gas Board to up its prices. The Gas Board say: no way. *We* wanted Gilbertian lyrics on the subject.

Report · by Len the Unlucky

The 20-line limit on this comp seems, in retrospect, altogether too handsome an indulgence: naturally our space-starved hopefuls, the dears, wolfed down their extra allowance, and Tim Hopkins's chirpy and laconic entry came like a breath of fresh air after all the rather dour wedges of rhymery. Still, the longer efforts are skilfully sustained; the £6 limit to each is already in the pipeline.

I'm a tankful of water,
I probably oughta,
Be proud of the heater I've got,
But gas or electric,
Or coal – I'm eclectic,
And really I don't care a jot.
Let the Nationalised Bosses,
Make larger their losses,
While Opec gets richer by turns,
Creating the crisis,
Increasing *ALL* prices,
She fiddles while Albion burns!

TIM HOPKINS

Said *Coal* to *Oil*: 'You make me boil –
With all your propaganda!'
Said *Oil* to *Coal*: 'Keep cool, old soul –
No need to raise your dander!'
Said *Grid* to *Gas*: 'Don't be an ass –
You know what my advice is.'
Said *Gas* to *Grid*: 'Do what you bid?!
I'll *keep* my modest prices!'
Said *Grid* to *Coal* to *Gas* to *Oil*:
'Yours the profit, mine the toil!'
Said *Oil* to *Gas* to *Coal* to *Grid*:
'I'll see you're done by as you did!'

And so the four precocious brats still snapped
and scrapped and squabbled,
Because each thought the other three had
nabbed and nicked and nobbled
The pickings that were rightly his if justice
true were meted
(For Hades hath no fury like an Ezra who
feels cheated).
But subtle Fate has laid in wait a
retribution horrid –
As every year our Hemisphere grows steadily
more torrid;
For soon the day, I'm glad to say, will dawn
of their come-uppance –
With solar power our daily dower, we'll buy
the lot for tuppence!

ROB HAROLD

For our future enjoyment of reduced
unemployment
And less radioactive pollution
We should make it our goal to use much
more coal
While it lasts – that's the C.B.'s solution.

The E.B. says no, we've now on the go
All these lovely atomic power stations;
We keep down the smoke, eliminate coke
And steady the world's populations.

You *must* raise your prices, the market's
in crisis,
Say the E.B. and C.B. together;
We'll do very well if you don't undersell
And we all pray for very cold weather.

The G.B. says nay, we're going to make hay
While the sun shines – and if you should fight us,
When it comes to the best and you two go west,
We'll have gas to cook, heat and light us.

ROD WOODSTOCK

When I came to this job as a rather old man,
(Said I to myself – said I)
I'll work on a new but ridiculous plan,
(Said I to myself – said I)

This nationalised board I'll treat as my own
Until I've a profit I'll squabble and moan,
But service to clients I'll cut to the bone,
(Said I to myself – said I)

I will use lots of cash for ads in the press
Although what use they are, well just no one
can guess
I'll raise all my prices until they appal,
Arousing the public's just anger and gall,
But work with the others – why, never at all!
(Said I to myself – said I)

I will run my own show and not be ignored
And make sure that my power is what none
can afford.

If bills are not paid, I'll cut off supplies
And this for the needy may be a surprise,
Though I might just cry if somebody dies.
(Said I to myself – said I.)

ROBIN CHASE

Assiac

Chess Board

No. 1392 Yearbook

It's good to report that Batsford have lived up to the promise of following up last year's first and splendid *Chess Yearbook*, once again competently edited by Kevin O'Connell. But why diminish rather than enlarge it? The first one (at £3.50) had 212 pages, the new one (at £2.95) a mere 152. True, it contains the basic features, such as 'Review of the Year' (very much shorter, alas, than last time), FIDE events, selected games, the International rating list and some other useful items. But it omits quite a few features which gave some lasting value to the previous effort, such as the sections on opening theory as well as on problems and endgame studies. Let's hope that this (and more) will be restored next time, even for an additional 50p or so.

Severe cuts in the games section too which had as many as 80 last time and a mere 20 now; well selected, to be sure, since those responsible, apart from the editor, were Bronstein, Taimanov, Wade, and Blackstock. Let's pick Portisch-Kavalek which got a well deserved prize for the 'most spectacular' game of one of the recent Wijk aan Zee tournaments.

1) d4,Ktf6; 2) c4,g6; 3) Ktc3,Bg7; 4) e4,d6; 5) f3,c6; 6) Be3,a6; 7) Bd3,b5. More daring and less solid than . . . Ktbd7 or . . . 0-0; **8) e5,Ktfd7; 9) f4,0-0; 10) Ktf3,Ktb6; 11) b3,Kt8d7; 12) a4!,bc:; 13) bc:,c5!; 14) a5,cd:; 15) Ktd4:,de:** Kavalek admits that only now he realised he would have to sacrifice his Queen; still his best chance; **16) Ktc6,Qe8; 17) ab:, ef:!; 18) Ktd5,fe:!; 19) Ktc7,Bc3†!** The point is to hamper the White KR; **20) Kf1.** Better than Ke2 countered by . . . Ktb6; and threat of B-check, **Bb7; 21) Kte8:,Bc6:; 22) Ktc7, Rad8; 23) Rc1** Portisch spent 35 minutes on this; no space for very complex analysis, **Bd2; 24) Ktd5,Bd5:; 25) cd:,Ktb6:!; 26) Rc5,Ktd5:; 27) g3,Rd6; 28) Kg2,Rfd8; 29) Rd5:?** Presumably Bc4 (as suggested by Ljubojevic) and Qf3 gave better chances for a win, **Rd5:; 30) Bc4,Rf5; 31) Qb3.** Certainly better than Rf1, countered by . . . Ba5!,Rf2†; **32) Kh3,Rd6!; 33) Qb8†,Kg7: 34) Qa7,g5; 35) Qe7:,g4†; 36) Kg4:, Rg6†; 37) Kh3,Rh6†; 38) Kg4,Rg6†; ½-½.**

Commendably algebraic 'pictorial' notation has been used, making the book a truly international title. It's good to see more and more books and columns here and in the USA dropping the antediluvian descriptive notation and going algebraic like the rest of the world.

I still have just a few lines left to mention *The Laws of Chess and their Interpretations*, at Pitman's for £1.35 and edited by Harry Golombek. Included are rules between sighted and blind players and the Uedemann Code (telecommunications notation). Useful anyway to have all the rules and regulations handy in one slim volume.

The 4-pointer for beginners is a game position in which White innocently played Be6:; how was he rudely awakened to find himself with a small, but unacceptable material deficit a few moves later? For 6 ladder-points **B** is a win. How to avoid that nasty g-pawn queening with a check? **C** (for 7) is a win achieved in 8 moves, a subtle miniature. Note that 1) Bd4? is a temptation merely drawing. Helpful hint: that Knight is quite a traveller. Usual prizes, entries by 9 August.

A: Spreckelsen-Weiss 1964: /2r2rk1/ppb2p1p/1q2b1p1/3B4/2Q5/2P2Kt2/PP3RPP/R5K1/.

B: R. Voia 1950: /k6Kt/P7/1K6/4p3/6p1/24/.

C: Henri Rinck: /24/1p6/2k3Kt1/4B3/p2PK3/8/.

Competition Report held over.

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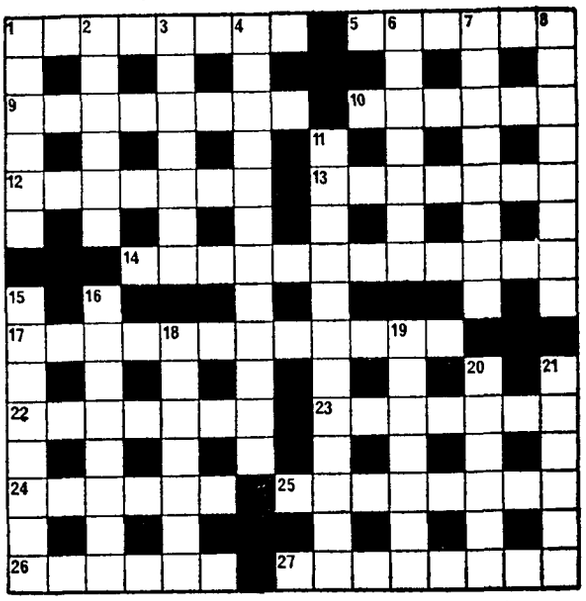
Weekend Crossword 1175

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1175, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 10 August.



ACROSS

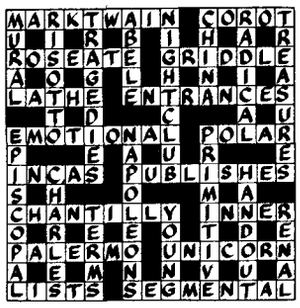
1. Try out leaving the backward east to take it easy and criticise (8).
5. Quote me in return a kind of medicine (6).
9. 'False, fleeting, perjur'd ——' *(K. Richard III)* (8).
10. Harm by giving breathing space to the devil (6).
12. An incident exists in a poem (7).
13. A name is wrong, and this may be the reason (7).
14. For a traveller it is possibly better to go left and right (12).
17. Part of service which gives one more off after a short time (6, 6).
22. Conclude there is no other world (7).
23. Arrangement for broadcasting tennis? (7).
24. The law is in a total muddle (6).
25. A planner tore this in pieces (8).
26. Tremble for a plant (6).
27. Teachers with a job in drinks (8).

DOWN

1. Appropriate friend for Pip (6).
2. Slowly as girl, soldier, and ring come together (6).
3. The plant would have to work if the arbitrator were dismissed (7).
4. Democratic process which makes for closer battle (6, 6).
6. Reminder for me to embrace people (7).
7. In migrations the birds hold the right answer (8).
8. Fighters who become unusually cross when breathless (8).
11. Onesidedness of workers in soft fruit (12).
15. The said sets are reformed and given support (8).
16. Tussled when a second blow started it (8).
18. Train to give railwaymen what may be true (7).
19. For fresh candidatures one has to read these choices (7).
20. A loved one with small bottle is in jolly mood (6).
21. Fishes? One does when the ice is frozen! (6).

SETSQUARE

Solution No 1173



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within the

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Detailed applications (2 copies), including a curriculum vitae and naming 3 referees, should be sent by airmail, not later than 30 August 1976 to the Registrar, University of Zambia, PO Box 2379, Lusaka, Zambia. Applicants resident in UK should also send 1 copy to Inter-University Council, 90/91 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 0DT. Further particulars may be obtained from either address.

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Mr. Patrick Smyth,
Kensington and Chelsea Play Association,
Grenfell Road,
Lancaster West Estate,
London W11.

APPOINTMENTS
Continued on page 160

The Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section)
require, as soon as possible, a

Research Officer

The successful applicant will be part of a research team who have a responsibility for recruitment to the union. He/she must have a knowledge of industry and trade unions, preferably combined with practical experience. A knowledge of the Motor Industry and industrial relations legislation would be advantageous. Candidates must also have background training/experience which indicates their ability to process material efficiently.

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The man or woman appointed will need flair and imagination and fluency in writing and speaking; a considerable degree of mobility and a propensity for motivating and organising teams of spare-time voluntary workers. There will be opportunities to tour overseas from time to time and possibly to transfer to VSO Field Officer posts in the years ahead.

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VSO Voluntary Service Overseas

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NEW STATESMAN
Vol. 92 No. 2367

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Exhibitions

GANYMED GALLERY, 11 Gt Turnstile, WC1. 405 9836. Henry Moore's 'Sketchbook 1926' facsimile edition.

Theatres

CHICHESTER. 0243 86333. 29 July at 2.0, 30, 31 July at 7.0 'Twelfth Night'; 29 July, 5 Aug. at 7.0, 31 July, 7 Aug. at 2.0 'The Circle'; Prev. 2 Aug. at 7.0, 3, 4, 6, 7 Aug. at 7.0, 5 August at 2.0 'Monsieur Perrichon's Travels'.

HAMPSTEAD THEATRE. 722 9301. No perf. Fri. 30 July. Final perfs. Sat. 5 & 8.30. 'Sparrowfall', by Alan Drury. 'Crackles with wit, challenges with satirical purpose'—F.T.

LYTTELTON (New National Theatre) 928 2252. Fri. 7.45, Sat. 2.30 & 7.45: 'Playboy of The Western World', by J. M. Synge. Mon. 7.45 'Watch It Come Down'. Tues. 7.45 & Wed. 2.30 & 7.45 'Weapons of Happiness'. Thurs. 7.45 'Blithe Spirit'. 100 + excellent £1 seats on sale day of perf.

ROYAL COURT. 730 1745. Last perf. Fri. 8, Sat. 8.30 'Small Change', written and directed by Peter Gill.

THEATRE ROYAL, WINDSOR. 95 61107. 'A Touch of Spring', by Samuel Taylor.

VANBRUGH THEATRE CLUB. To 1 Aug. Shakespeare: 'Hamlet'. Details RADA, 62 Gower St. London WC1. 636 7076.

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BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Sat. 31 July 3 p.m. 'Open Day'. Tues. 3 Aug. 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. All welcome. Send s.a.e. for full programme.

THEOSOPHY. S.a.e. for free pamphlets, booklist, programme of talks, September. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

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Appointments

Continued from page 159

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